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The Original Chèvre



KITCHEN CONFIDENCE

All About Goat Cheese (& How to Use It in Every Meal)

by Riddley Gemperlein-Schirm • July 14, 2015 • 1 Comment

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*Inspired by conversations on the **Food52 Hotline**, we're sharing tips and tricks that make navigating all of our kitchens easier and more fun.*

*Today: We've paired up with **Goat Cheeses of France** to show you how to use a **variety** French goat cheeses in different dishes—no matter the meal.*



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Do You Really Need

There's good news for those of us who strive to incorporate cheese into every meal possible: Goat cheeses are *not* all the same. Since there are so many different flavor profiles, textures, and degrees of crumbliness in goat cheese (due to how and how long it's aged), there are endless ways to use it. Here are the three main categories of goat cheese:

- **Fresh:** These are rindless, fairly spreadable, and come in a variety of shapes. You're probably used to seeing a log-shaped version at grocery stores.
- **Aged:** Aged goat cheeses are exactly what their name suggests. Allowed to ripen for up to 12 weeks, these cheeses have a firmer texture, more prominent flavor, and can be grated.
- **Soft-Ripened:** The soft cheeses age up to several weeks and have either a natural or bloomy rind (meaning one that's soft, edible, and white). A natural rind occurs when air dries the outside of the cheese, creating a thin crust or rind (like in Valençay, Crottin, and Chabichou du Poitou—more on these in a minute). A bloomy rind is the result of **Penicillium candidum**, a white, bacterial powder applied to the outside of the cheese during the cheese-making process. The bacteria creates a white surface—akin to **Brie**—that's sometimes a little fuzzy (like you see on Florette or Bûcheron/Bûcherondin).



to Refrigerate
Butter? (& 9 Other
Debated Foods)



Valençay (1), Crottin (2), Chabichou du Poitou (3), Bûcheron or Bûcherondin (4), and Florette (5)

The variety we're likely to choose for a **cheese spread** is soft-ripened, but there are so many types, trying to figure out which one to get at the farmers market or grocery can be tricky. Here's a little guide to help you out (pictured above, too):

1. **Valençay:** Known for its pyramid shape, Valençay has a natural, blue-grey ash rind. The cheese is smooth and dense, yet creamy—it's tang is balanced by some earthy and nutty notes.
2. **Crottin:** With a slightly nutty flavor and a white rind, Crottin starts creamy and dries as it ages, making it ideal for crumbling.
3. **Chabichou du Poitou:** The cylindrical cheese's butter layer (beneath the rind) is a precursor to its firm-yet-creamy interior. Its flavor balances salty and tangy.
4. **Bûcheron (aka Bûcherondin):** A semi-firm cheese, Bûcheron can be crumbled or sliced. In flavor and harder texture when it's young, this cheese gets more intense and softer as it ages.
5. **Florette:** A creamy cheese with a bloomy rind, Florette has a texture akin to Brie (but, don't worry, its flavor is all goat).

(Note: If you can't find the varieties we've shown here, do a little cheesemongering of your own and look for similar characteristics in other types of goat cheese.)



Once you get home, goat cheese will keep in the fridge, tightly sealed, for 2 to 3 weeks.

Store soft or semi-soft cheese in a resealable plastic container. For semi-hard cheeses, wrap in parchment or wax paper and then in foil or plastic wrap to prevent from drying out. It's best to store any cheese in the vegetable crisper, where the temperature is cold and stable.

Always serve goat cheese at room temperature, so take it out of the fridge 30 minutes or so before serving.

More: The good (and bad) funk of stinky cheese.

As for what to do with all these cheeses, we asked our **Test Kitchen Manager Derek** for some ideas on how to incorporate goat cheese into sweet, savory, and everything-in-between dishes.

From chilaquiles to plum tart, here's how to eat goat cheese for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and dessert.

Start your day the goat cheese way.



- Replace queso fresco with a crumbly goat cheese like Bûcheron in **Chilaquiles Verdes**.
- Sure, it's summer, but these goat cheese-topped **eggs in a wintry tomato and kale sauce** is comfort food no matter the season.
- **Goat cheese grits** are great—and even better with coffee-spiked red eye gravy, country ham, and a fried egg. A creamy goat cheese, such as Florette, works well here.

Lunch, dinner, lunner, etc.



- Finish a **risotto** the same way you'd finish grits, by folding in creamy goat cheese.
- **This showstopper pasta** with cow's Brie, tomatoes, garlic, and basil takes easily to Florette or French Goat Brie.
- Make a grilled cheese with goat cheese. It's an especially good stand-in for Brie, so Derek suggests **this sandwich** since **the honey, pistachio, and kale pesto holds its own against the cheese's assertive flavor.**
- A cheese like Valençay would make a great burger **topping.**
- Crumble goat cheese—perhaps Chabichou du Poitou—over **polenta cakes** with caramelized onions and honey.

Salads of all sorts.



- Replace feta with a sharp goat cheese in a **peach and apricot salad** or a **sweet-corn salad** swathed in buttermilk dressing. Crumbly cheeses like Crottin and Bûcheron work well in these instances.
- Pair goat cheese's tang with the bitterness of grapefruit for **one stellar salad**. Almonds and herbs don't hurt things either.
- Watermelon and goat cheese make the best of friends. **This salad** has a verbena-infused vinaigrette, too, which is all sorts of herbaceous and awesome.

A little sweet, a little savory.



- Substitute goat cheese for mascarpone in this **savory plum tart**. The honey and sweetness of the stone fruit tame the goat cheese's strong flavor. Derek suggests using Crottin.
- **Fried goat cheese** drizzled with honey and hit with a smattering of black pepper? Yes, please.
- Substitute Valençay in these **savory thumbprint cookies** topped with fig preserves.

What's your favorite dish with goat cheese? Tell us in the comments below!

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TAGS: KITCHEN CONFIDENCE, GOAT CHEESE, FRENCH, CHEESE

