

GOAT CHEESE



French Goat Cheese for the Holidays

By Liz Thorpe, French Goat Cheese Ambassador

I like the holidays as an excuse to serve rare and exceptional foods. For example, consider making a cheese plate extraordinary by focusing on one particular type of cheese. This year, before the pies roll out, I'll be offering a course with a spectrum of cheeses as white as the snow I'm hoping will fall.

French goat cheeses offer an astounding variety of flavors and textures. Plus they're well suited to a properly yeasty, dry champagne, and who doesn't want a flute of that to celebrate?

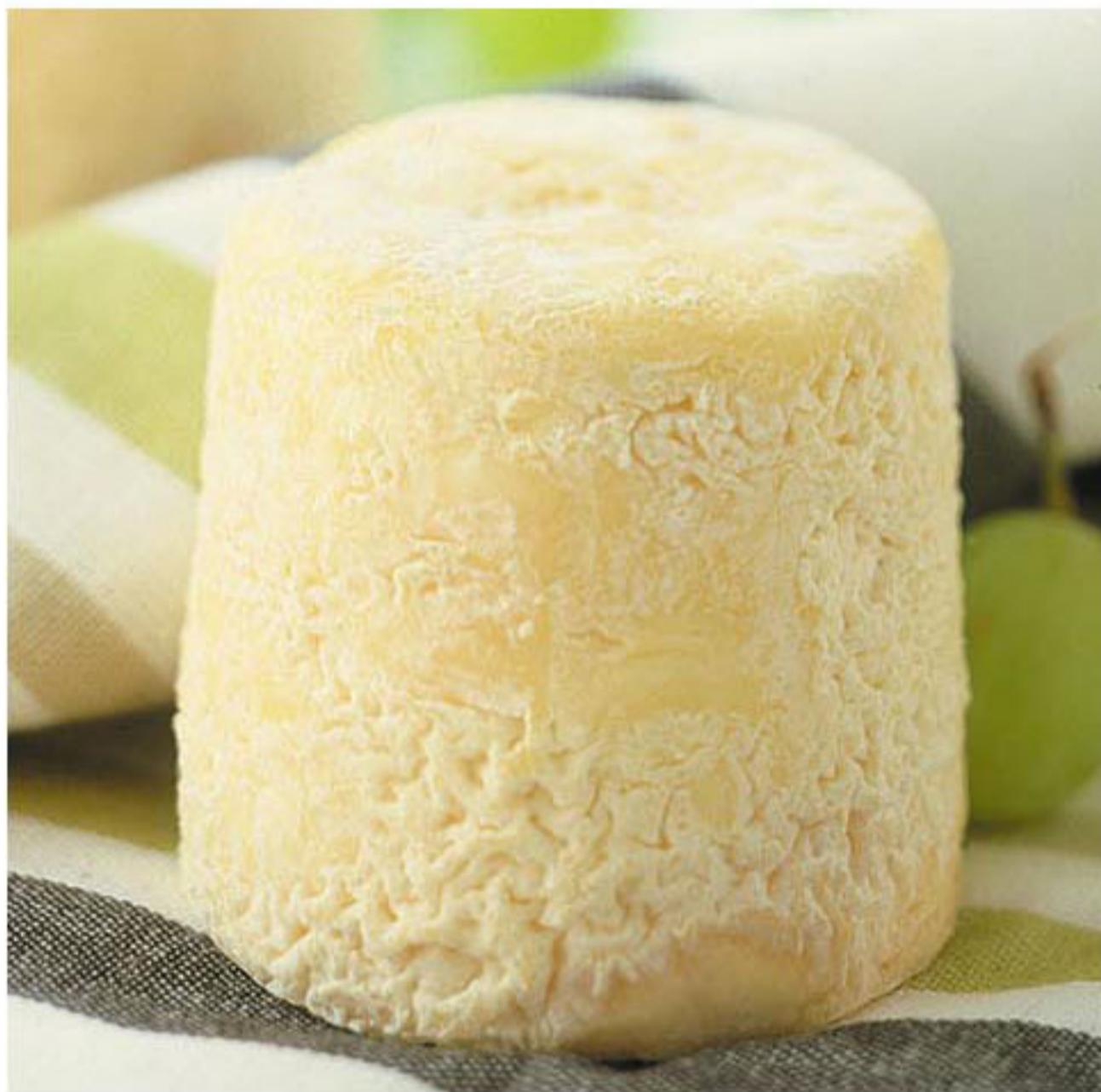
Start with a dollop of impeccably fresh chèvre (I like Le Cornilly, a fresh crottin) for its palate-cleansing tang, and garnish it with a luxe treat like truffled honey or a chunk of honeycomb.



Follow that with a well-aged ashed offering from the Loire. They come in all kinds of lovely shapes — logs and pyramids and the like — and the ash forms a totally edible foggy gray coat with clean mineral notes. I like a Valençay-style with a sprinkle of pomegranate seeds for color.



Next move on to a dense, dry nugget from Poitou. You can find these easily by looking for the small, yellowy goat cheeses with rinds that look like a brain. Chevrot and Chabichou du Poitou are widely available and reliably delicious — mellow and nearly nutty. This is also the time, on your journey around the cheese plate, for a champagne-refilling pit stop.



From there take a turn to the more obscure, heading south to the Pyrenees for the aged tommes, many of which get a salt water washing for a pale orange rind and savory, almost meaty finish. I recommend Tomme de Bethmale or Tomme d'Aydius. A chewy fruit and nut-laden flatbread softens the gentle funk.



And, as if everyone isn't already totally bowled over by this point, I like to show the blue cheese world beyond Stilton. Goat blues, such as Bleu du Bocage, are lacey and delicate — a bit crumbly, without the heady astringency associated with Roquefort. Here, too, a drizzle of honey is welcome, as are a few slivers of nearly candied medjool date.



For more information, visit TheOriginalChevre.com

RETAIL INFORMATION:

- Le Cornilly is at Ideal Cheese Shop
- Ash Valençay and Sainte Maure are available at Murray's Cheese, Bedford Cheese Shop and Zabar's
- Chevrot is at many Whole Foods Markets, Union Market, Murray's Cheese, Zabar's
- Chabichou du Poitou is at Murray's Cheese, Zabar's, Bedford Cheese Shop
- Tomme de Bethmale is at Fairway Market, Zabar's
- Tomme d'Aydius is at Murray's Cheese
- Bleu du Bocage is at Murray's Cheese