



P'tit Basque – Istara, French Pyrénées

P'tit Basque is a pasteurized, semi-hard sheep milk cheese made on the French side of the rolling, picturesque Pyrénées Mountains in a region populated by the Basques. Traditionally, this cheese was handmade by shepherds from left over curds set aside from milking their ewes, and the same, long-established methods are applied today. Produced by a company called Istara, P'tit Basque is a labor intensive cheese considering the ewes are still milked by hand and the curds literally “cut” by hand. During this curd cutting process, the cheese is covered in a thin brown rind with a basket weave pattern similar to that of Manchego. After aging for approximately 70 days, the resulting cheese is a bit creamier and milder in flavor than a Manchego, albeit with a similar salty, nutty finish. The savory note of roasted almond found in the cheese helps to highlight the vibrant green apple and grapefruit notes in this zesty Albariño from Lodi.

Wine Pairing: 2015 Bokisch Albariño, Terra Alta Vineyard, Lodi, CA



St. George – Matos Cheese Co., Santa Rosa, CA

St. George is a raw cow milk cheese made by Joe Matos Cheese Co. in Santa Rosa and is based on a traditional family recipe brought back by Joe and Mary Matos from their native Portuguese Azores Islands in the 1970s. Their daughter, Sylvia became the fifth generation cheesemaker and describes St. George as a cross between Monterey Jack and Cheddar. Far from a mechanically produced cheese, the curds used to make St. George are patiently turned by hand until they achieve the right consistency. After separating the whey from the curds, it is pressed with homemade weights (buckets of hardened cement) before aging. While quite old fashioned in process, the resulting cheese is deeply flavored with a savory, Cheddar-like bite and a fresh cream tang. The bright, pungent notes in the cheese create a delicious contrast to this exotic fruit and white flower-scented Riesling from San Luis Obispo County, helping to coax notes of Bosc pear and candied lime peel to the forefront.

Wine Pairing: 2016 Union Sacré 'Fräulein' Riesling, Riven Rock Vineyard, San Luis Obispo, CA



Vlaskaas – Beemster, Holland

Vlaskaas is a pasteurized, semi-firm cow milk cheese made by Beemster in North Holland and is named after the flowering Flax plant that grows wild throughout the Dutch countryside. The recipe for Vlaskaas dates back to the Middle Ages when it was produced seasonally and served at the annual 'Oogstfeest' or Flemish harvest festival. As festival traditions fell away, the recipe was buried, only to be rediscovered in 2004 during a review of Beemster's historical cheeses. Still made in a traditional manner, this delightful Gouda-esque cheese benefits from the incredibly high quality milk sourced from Beemster's flock of pampered, pasture-raised cows. The resulting cheese, which is aged just five months, is softer and creamier in texture than your typical Gouda. Peppered with tiny protein crystals that give it that pleasant crunch, Vlaskaas offers notes of butterscotch and caramel, which complement the notes of cinnamon and clove in this luscious blend of Zinfandel and Shiraz from Barossa Valley, Australia.

Wine Pairing: 2015 Groom Bush Block Zinfandel, Barossa Valley, Australia



Fleur Verte – Le Chèvrefeuille, S.A., Périgord, France

Fleur Verte is a pasteurized goat milk cheese aged for just about four days before being wrapped for shipment. Named for its appearance, Fleur Verte or 'Green Flower' is produced by the small, artisan goat cheese company, Le Chèvrefeuille S.A., in Périgord France, east of Bordeaux. Charming in appearance and flavor, this five pound wheel boasts a scalloped perimeter, giving it a daisy shape while dried thyme, tarragon and crushed pink peppercorn coat the exterior and perfume the chalk-white interior. Scented with Provençal countryside aromatics, this cheese offers a moist and delicate texture, fresh, clean flavors that are distinctly herbaceous, and a tangy, lemony finish. While you may not think to pair Fleur Verte with red wine upon first sight, we were all pleasantly surprised at how well the bright tang and herbal notes in the cheese complement this juicy and slightly earthy blend of Merlot and Cabernet Franc from Languedoc-Roussillon.

Wine Pairing: 2015 Domaine Girard Rouge, Malepère A.O.P., Languedoc-Roussillon, France