



Home Cook Bake Dine Drink Pantry Plant Politics Health Environment Media Memoir Travel Reviews Soapbox

Join Us | Login

Search



About Zester Daily



Catalan Artisan Cheeses

Tweet Like 17

Goat, sheep and cow's milk cheeses are having a heyday in Spain's Catalunya region.

By Sue Style | Thursday, 08 March 2012 | 00:26



Enric Canut is a Catalan cheese guru, co-founder of the dairy **Tros de Sort** and a tireless ambassador for Spain's cheeses abroad. We met up last fall at the tiny artisan market in Borredà in the foothills of the Pyrenees. Cheese, which has always been made here in Spain's distinctive northeastern province, is on the move in Catalunya, says Canut. It's not a wholly new development, but until now the traditional goat and sheep's milk varieties were always a sideline to meat production and made on a small scale, often for home consumption.

But then in the 1980s, a generation of young escapees from the city in search of a better quality of life bought small holdings in remote country areas. They were known as *neo-rurales* -- or *hippies*, says Canut with a smile. Small-scale cheese making was perfect for these newcomers to the country because it required little capital and provided instant cash flow.



Stay Connected to Zester

Enter Email Address



Zester's Most Popular Stories



As journalism ranks shrink, the Food & Environmental Reporting Network is funding needed food reporting. By Corie Brown



Chef KN Vinod explains why he thinks Indian food is poised to be the next big thing in the U.S. By Anmini Ramachandran



Thomas Jefferson's vision of his home state as a bona fide wine producer is coming true. By Patrick Comiskey



Chinese chefs evolve as Slow Food and environmentally friendly methods spread across the globe. By Manuela Zoninsein



New food rules reflect the author's personal taste, health, politics -- and anxiety level. By L. John Harris



Whether cooking black beans or pintos, the key to flavor is plenty of onion, garlic and cilantro. By Martha Rose Shulman

VS4 Search the web for food ...

VSW FeatureLink™



Aglianico 2009 Villa Raiano Italian Wine

Transport your tastebuds to Italy with this intense, full bodied wine! Save 10% on 12 bottles!



Cynara cardunculus (cardo) at Mas Marce.

Early adapters

One of the earliest *neo-rurales* was Toni Chueca of **Formatge Bauma** in Borredà, home of the annual Borredà market. "When we came up here in the 1980s, there was very little cheese made and it was mainly for use in the home," he says. Chueca and a band of like-minded friends founded ACREFA, Catalunya's association for artisan cheese makers. Nowadays he makes several goat's milk varieties, including the semi-hard Garrotxa and the fragrant, square, ashed Carrat.

A second, more recent development identified by Canut is the farmer-turned-cheese-maker. Martí Huguet of **Mas Alba**, the family's 18th-century farmhouse in Empordà, which nowadays doubles up as a rural B&B, is a case in point. Three years ago, he realized that the kind of small-scale mixed farming that his family had practiced for generations was no longer economically viable. They already had a herd of Granadina goats they raised for meat. When the price of meat barely covered costs, cheese seemed an obvious way to go.

With the help of Internet sites that give instructions on how to make cheese, and input and encouragement from Katherine McLoughlin of Barcelona's famous cheese store **Formatgeria La Seu**, Martí converted the garage into a dairy. His products -- Petit'Ot, El Terrós, El Cremós and El Uff! are available in specialty shops and restaurants throughout the neighborhood.

Repurposed sheep

Huguet's close neighbor Manel Marce at **Mas Marce** makes sheep's milk cheeses. Members of his family have been shepherds for seven generations. Three years ago, Marcé turned to cheese making, using milk from his herd of **Ripollesa**, a breed once typical of Catalunya but until recently in danger of dying out. All of Manel's cheeses (such as Llanut, wrapped in a soft cloud of sterilized fleece) are made with thistle rennet, from the stamens of the beautiful, mauve cardoon plant which grows on the farm.

Professionals turned cheese-makers

The third type of Catalunya cheese-maker, according to Canut, is the university-educated professional who turns to cheese-making after a career in business or the civil service. "I worked for years in the agriculture department of the Catalunya region," says Salvador Maura of **Mas d'Eroles** in Adràll, high in the Catalan Pyrenees, "and I got to meet plenty of cheese-making folks. I told myself, 'When I grow up, I'm going to be a cheese-maker.'"

At 39, he did just that. Today, with the help of Judit, his formidable *jefa de producció* (head of production) and Ester (part-time cheese-maker and district midwife), he makes a dozen different varieties from cow and sheep's milk, cheese which can be found in top local restaurants and specialty shops in Spain and the U.S.

It's an exciting time for cheese in Catalunya, confirms Canut, whose dairy produces a celebrated bloomy-rind soft cheese called Tou dels Til.lers. Many of these beauties never leave the country and can only be sampled at the farm gate or in specialty shops in Barcelona and Madrid. But an intrepid few reach the export market – Tou dels Til.lers can be found at **La Fromagerie** in London, while Chueca's plump little Garrotxa and ashed Carrat are stocked by **Brindisa** in London's Borough Market and **Murrays** in New York City. Maura's Ermesenda and Serrat can be found at **Forever Cheese**.

*Sue Style is a food, wine and travel writer with a passion for cheese and a fondness for Catalunya (where both her kids have had the good taste to settle). Her most recent book is "Cheese: Slices of Swiss Culture," published in Basel, Switzerland, by **Bergli Books**.*

Top photo: Carrat cheese from Formatge Bauma. Credit: Sue Style

Slideshow credit: Sue Style

Comment



Royal Albert -100 Years Of Teas

Start your day with Royal Albert's 100 Years of Tea Collection; Beautifully Packaged Mugs & More.

mytableware.com



All Star Wine Staff Recommendations!

Savor the taste of wines from our courteous & knowledgeable staff. Click & start shopping today!

allstarwine.com



Find Great Prices on Kosher Wines

Get the perfect wine to suit your taste.



Zester Daily
ZesterDaily

Privacy



ZesterDaily #Chipotles, meet #Gre in this yummy #guacamole #recipe. [@wholefoods](https://www.ow.ly/a8Zyh) @trade @dianekochilas @ZesterDaily 7 minutes ago · reply · retweet · favorite



LoraKruk I happen to LOVE cum in this yummy #guacamole #recipe. [@wholefoods](https://www.ow.ly/a8Zyh) @trade @dianekochilas @ZesterDaily about 1 hour ago · reply · retweet · favorite



hnhbooks RT @zesterdaily: What #JacquesPepin recipe? Enter to win "Essential Pepin" [@jacques_pepin](https://www.ow.ly/a9X6c) 52 minutes ago · reply · retweet · favorite



ZesterDaily #PinotNoir? #Caberne #Malbec? They're all gifts from France! [@LoireV](https://www.ow.ly/a8ZJc)













Join the c

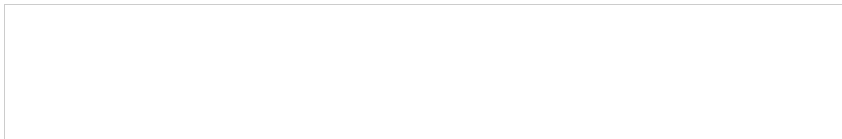
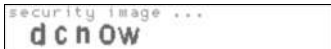
Zester Daily on Facebook

[Like](#)

3,803 people like **Zester Daily**.

 Mary	 Helen	 elle	 Trista TRISCI	 Michelle
 Deborah	 Alan	 Stevie	 Rita	 Perri

Zester Daily on Facebook

[smaller](#) | [bigger](#)

Write the displayed characters

...

Hi, glad you enjoyed getting to know the artisan cheeses of Catalunya! No idea about sourcing in LA (I'm in Alsace, so not too up on cheese shops in CA) but try the folks at Forever Cheese or Murrays, in case they know where these beauties are sold over your way. Thistle rennet is fascinating, not very commonly used, but certainly a feature in Spain and in Portugal (most famous cheeses made with it are probably Torta del Casar DO and Azeitao DOP); they make an infusion with the thistle stamens, like a tea, and use this to set the milk instead of calf's rennet. It gives a lovely acidity and a pleasant hint of bitterness. For more on thistle rennet, see the Spring 2010 issue of Culture Cheese Mag.

Sue

a guest , March 20, 2012

...

Great article. Do you think the cheese is available in Los Angeles? Thistle rennet sounds unusual. Is that commonly used instead of animal rennet?

a guest , March 20, 2012

Last Updated on Thursday, 08 March 2012 01:32

[Home](#)[Advertise with Us](#) | [RSS Feeds](#) | [Contact Us](#)
[User Agreement](#) | [Privacy](#) | [About Us](#)

Copyright © 2012 Zester LLC.

Site Design & Hosted by digical