



Elegant Plate

Riesling is the most elegant grape of the Alsace region, producing a graceful, crisp white wine with a touch of sweetness. Happily, the green hills of Alsace are also home to a variety of superb cheeses.

Recommended tasting order: Livarot, Munster, Tomme d'Alsace, Tomme de Savoie.

The Cheeses

Munster (AOC). An ancient washed-rind cheese that traces its roots back to monastic life in the Middle Ages. Munster is made from the milk of cows that graze in the mountains of Vosges region in Alsace, northeastern France. Its bright pinkish-orange rind turns darker and more reddish with age. If you can't find it, ask for: Another washed-wind cheese such as Livarot or Epoisses.

Tomme d'Alsace. This is a pungent, semi-soft, washed-rind cow's milk cheese made in the Alsace region of France. The practice of washing the cheese with wine as it matures helps it to develop fruity notes with hints of mushrooms, grass, and butter. If you can't find it, ask for: Chimay , Saint-Nectaire.

Tomme de Savoie. Many variations of this cow's milk cheese are produced in the mountainous Haute-Savoie region on the Swiss border. They are generally firm with small holes. They have mild nutty flavors and come in flattened cylinders with crusty natural rinds. If you can't find it, ask for: Morbier.

Livarot (AOC). This ancient and noble cheese from Normandy dates back more than 700 years, originating in the monasteries. A cow's milk washed-rind cheese, it has an assertive aroma and nutty flavor. The pâte is semi-soft, creamy and smooth with small holes. The round cheeses are traditionally encircled with five strips of sedge or raffia. If you can't find it, ask for: Pavé d'Auge, Pont-l'Evêque or Munster.

Comté (AOC). One of the most popular cheeses in France, Comté is produced in the rich mountain pastures of the Jura. Its firm and supple pâte, with holes, or "eyes," has a nutty, slightly salty yet sweet taste. Comté is produced year-round by small, cooperative dairies known as fruitières. If you can't find it, ask for: Beaufort, French Gruyère.