

Affineur



Crispeta de Reypenaer a la nou moscada, can be read on the menu of 'the best chef in the world', Ferran Adria from El Bulli in Rosas, Spain: Crisps of Reypenaer with nutmeg. The chef of chefs, who can put anything he wants on his dinner menu and always chooses the best, uses Reypenaer, a Dutch cheese, type Gouda. Couldn't Adria find any slow food cheese from a small farmer, who still makes his cheese by hand and leaves them to ripen behind his cloggy shelf? No, Ferran Adria chooses for Reypenaer, a Dutch brand name which is conquering the cheese market. Reypenaer is not a producer of cheese, but is what the French call 'affineur'. Someone who ripens the cheese.

Wijngaard Cheese, owned by the Wijngaard family, is a company from the small town of Woerden, near Utrecht, and matures their cheeses in an exactly one hundred year old warehouse. The last one left in Holland. The cheeses are made

in a small scale dairy. The cheese maker works as naturally as possible to enhance the cheese with micro organisms and enzymes, which give the cheese his deep flavor. Additionally, the ripening influences the structure and harshness of the product, which also enhances the flavor.

Reypenaer cheese is not matured in a modern climate-controlled area, where humidity is kept high and temperature low, so the cheese gets a fast and neutral ripening with a minimum weight loss. Instead, the cheese is kept in old warehouse attics, its old wooden beams giving the cheese its distinguished flavor and the climate is controlled by opening and closing the shutters. The cheese loses more moist (which makes them more valuable), but gain more flavor. Additionally, they lack that hot sharpness of modern ripened cheeses. Very special. One can appreciate what Ferran Adria sees in Reypenaer.

Reypenaer is doing well: the ripening warehouse, situated near the Old Rhine river, is loaded. But what to do next? Wijngaard is building new ripening caves, modernly adjustable, but in a way that the climatologic circumstances meet those of the old warehouse. One cannot improve nature.

The cheeses that come from those caves are a six month old Wyngaard Affineurs and Chèvre Affiné, a ripened goat cheese.

Both cheeses, Reypenaer and Wyngaard are delicious and meet the expectations of the chefs in Europe: a constant high quality. It's understandable that the restaurant and hotel business – never to like surprises - rely on this cheese.

I was told Wijngaard will soon launch a new kind of cheese cutter onto the market, 'Le Guillotin', to cut the cheese at the dinner table for an exclusive culinary experience. I can't wait.

Article written by a notorious/infamous gastronomy critic and food expert from Holland.