

CHEESE CHAMPIONS

THE WORLD'S CRÈME DE LA CRÈME
OF RAW MILK CHEESE

Lannoo

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Why ‘real cheese’ is timely and important

As the implications of intensive farming and industrial-scale food production make themselves felt across the globe, there has never been more focus on how our food is produced, how it tastes, and how good (or not) it is for us and the planet. Against this backdrop, the publication of the first collection that introduces the raw milk farm-made cheeses from around the world and the people behind them – be they maker, monger or affineur – feels particularly well timed.

In *Cheese Champions: The world’s crème de la crème of raw milk cheese*, we finally have a book that comprehensively explains the work that goes into these cheeses. We can see the kind of food systems we as consumers support through buying them, and how and why spending more money on real cheese than one might on its mass-produced equivalent can deliver better value in terms of flavour, nutrition, and ethical and environmental responsibility. After working at Neal’s Yard Dairy for some 30 years, for the past 10 as a director, I have had the privilege of meeting many of the people and eating many of the cheeses featured in this book – but it is increasingly important that they and their intrinsic qualities reach a larger audience.

Neal’s Yard Dairy’s activities as a monger, maturer and exporter of cheese have allowed us the opportunity over the years to engage with similar businesses facing similar challenges in many countries. In the face of those challenges, the community of people who work with real cheese is becoming increasingly dynamic and integrated. It is to this network that our book pays tribute. And it is by extending this network even wider, bringing into its reach those who eat the cheese as well as those who make it, that it will continue to strengthen and endure.

Jason Hinds,
Sales Director Neal’s Yard Dairy Londen



Introduction

WHY PUBLISH A BOOK ABOUT “REAL CHEESE”?

In early 2018, we met up over a pint and a good meal. By we, I mean Frederic Van Tricht from Kaasaffineurs van Tricht and Giedo De Snijder from Kaasmakerij Karditsel. The meeting in itself wasn't particularly special because we made an effort to get together once every few months. What was unique was the invariably candid conversations between a cheese affineur and a cheese producer about the ins and outs of our cheese business, our collaboration, and how the cheese market we were involved in was evolving. Those meetings were enriching and invaluable.

As a result of our shared passion and experiences with raw milk cheese, in the summer of 2018 we had the idea of putting together a cheese book in which the champions of the international cheese scene would talk about how they produce and ripen authentic cheese – cheese that irrefutably makes a difference, both in terms of taste and intrinsic value.

We were undoubtedly inspired to do so by the book *Reinventing the Wheel: Milk, microbes and the fight for real cheese* by Bronwen and Francis Percival, which was published in 2017. In this book, the authors first discuss what was lost when industrial cheese replaced artisanal cheese, which is very much a product of the unique location where it's made. They then illustrated the changing landscape in the cheese world and how more artisanal cheesemakers and affineurs are discovering the special bond between microbes, milk, and flavour. It is these stories about real cheese that we want to bring extensively to light in this book.

WHAT IS REAL CHEESE?

Cheese always tells a story. It says something about the location, the dairy animals, and the people that make it. It originates from the soil and grows from a longing to create something beautiful and nutritious. It's been that way for centuries, but does that still apply today?

In little over a century, industrial preparation methods have altered every aspect of the cheesemaking process, from the animals that produce the milk to the microbial strains that ferment the cheese, to the production methods used.

Raw milk has gradually been marginalized under the pretence that it is a threat to public health – following an intensive lobbying effort by the economically powerful food industry, which profited most from pasteurizing milk to supply the same standardized product time and time again.

Over many generations, that industrialization has led to a monumental shift in preferences and tastes. Consumers no longer wanted tantalizing, creamy, or sharp, pungent cheeses; mild-flavoured cheeses, price, and shelf life had become the main buying incentives.

In response to this anonymous uniformity underpinning the apparent abundance of cheeses in cheese displays, a countermovement arose from a renewed way of thinking that focused on the biodiversity of the pasture, the dairy animals, and the microflora of the dairy farm. This



is a promising development that shows us in practical terms why the more distinctive and flavourful cheeses deserve a place at our tables. Moreover, this approach has led to a revival of artisanal cheese production, partly thanks to modern consumers' demand for quality foods that are locally and traditionally produced.

Compared to the overwhelming industrialization of cheese, traditional preparation methods not only lead to better quality and an authentic character but also to increased food safety and sustainability. That is why we not only want to talk about making cheese but also about farming the milk for the cheese; just like fine wine, good cheese is largely determined by the quality of its ingredients. Farm and flavour are inextricably linked. Cheese is unique in that respect because, with the right production methods, cheese can bring together the biodiversity of three different worlds: flora, fauna and microbiota – in a way that is reflected in the flavour cheese enthusiasts taste. In other words, real cheese allows us to taste an entire agricultural system. It's a model for how ecological and sustainable food production should look and be experienced in the future.

WHAT ARE REAL CHEESEMAKERS?

The time is ripe for a book that puts the crème de la crème of the contemporary international cheese scene on the map – a book written by a group of exemplary cheesemakers from Europe and America who devote their passion, expertise and experience to offering cheese with intrinsic quality to the consumer every single day. The result is a series of portraits of people and cheeses illustrating what makes real cheese special and what unique flavours they create. It's the best way to show what it takes to produce and conserve authentic cheese.

We hope that this book provides an inspirational journey through our globally shared cultural history and gives insight into the tensions at play between progress, modernity, and tradition. This book aims to provide a clear, comprehensible tour of the fascinating world of traditional cheese production through text and images. That is why this book will be published in two editions: a Dutch and an English version.

Each story touches on the following themes:

- *the cheese culture in the various countries;*
- *the personal cheese journey of the cheesemaker or affineur;*
- *how their passion for and vision of real cheese grew;*
- *the incentives, guiding principles, expectations and challenges that they face in their day-to-day operations;*
- *a few final words for the cheese world;*
- *a featured cheese with a taste profile and pairing tips.*

Sadly, we do not have enough room to highlight all of the real cheesemakers and affineurs in this book. That is why we have selected 15 trendsetters from Europe and North America, thereby trying to bring as many different cheese varieties as possible to light. In the acknowledgements, we have included a list of producers that we haven't been able to do justice to in this book but who certainly deserve to be mentioned. Who knows, perhaps we'll follow up with a second book with trendsetters if this book manages to inspire the international cheese world and leaves it wanting more.

WHAT DOES REAL CHEESE TASTE LIKE?

Although wine and cheese are very similar when it comes to assessing their intrinsic value, there are still no standards for the appraisal of cheeses like those we have for wines. Still, like wine, cheese can easily be assessed on characteristics such as texture, aromas and flavours, albeit with slightly modified criteria. We can similarly discern primary, secondary, and tertiary aromas and describe the mouthfeel.

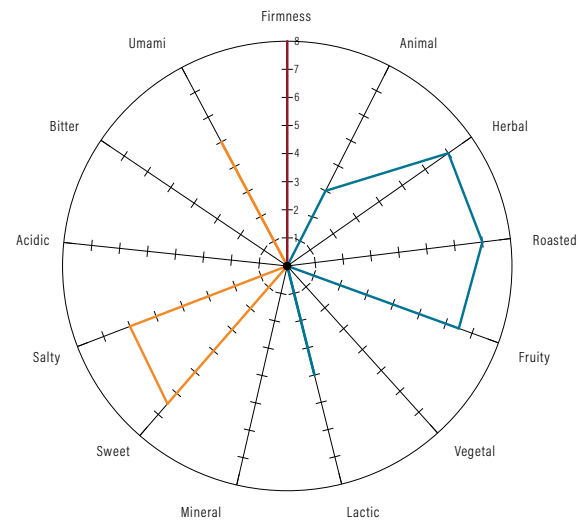
Analysing how and why a cheese develops certain aromas, flavours, and textures provides us with valuable insight into its primary ingredient (milk), the production process and the maturation process. The question then arises: why aren't there any grand-cru cheeses like there are grand-cru wines?

Jasper Hill Farm, an American cheese dairy in Vermont – which you can read about in a later chapter of this book – has developed a model for their customers describing the sensory qualities of their cheeses. The dairy farm uses the model to clearly communicate the characteristics of the different cheese batches and their corresponding profiles. Jasper Hill was so kind as to provide us with their concept of the sensory model for this book.

The taste profile that you will find at the end of each chapter is based on Jasper Hill's model in a slightly modified and simplified form. But, make no mistake: behind this simplified form lies an extensive taste test with professional tasting and evaluation by one and the same person. Professional wine taster, Charlotte Nauwelaerts, took on this important task with dedication and verve. Charlotte has a Level 4 diploma from the internationally renowned WSET (Wine & Spirit Education Trust), whose programme participants are prepared for the most prestigious jobs in the wine industry through intensive theoretical and practical training. She also uses this extensive experience in cheese tasting to recognize and define their various aromas. For ten years, Charlotte has worked at Elsen Kaasambacht in Leuven (Belgium), one of the most famous cheesemongers in the Benelux. Her daily work consists of ripening and tasting cheese. You will find Charlotte on Instagram at [@charlotte_and_wine](#).

We have included an example to illustrate which basic characteristics form the basis of the taste profiles you will find in this book. L'Etivaz AOP is a hard, Swiss, raw milk cheese, produced during the summer months from May to October in the alpine pastures of the Vaud Alps. The cheese has a firm texture, and its dominant aromas are roasted and herbal. After this brief summary follows a more extensive description of the flavours.

	CHARACTERISTIC	VALUE
TEXTURE	<i>Firmness</i>	8.5
AROMA	<i>Animal</i>	6
AROMA	<i>Herbal</i>	7
AROMA	<i>Roasted</i>	7
AROMA	<i>Fruity</i>	4
AROMA	<i>Vegetal</i>	0
AROMA	<i>Lactic</i>	0
AROMA	<i>Mineral</i>	0
FLAVOUR	<i>Sweet</i>	3
FLAVOUR	<i>Salty</i>	6
FLAVOUR	<i>Acidic</i>	0
FLAVOUR	<i>Bitter</i>	0
FLAVOUR	<i>Umami</i>	4



WHAT IS OUR MISSION?

We want to raise awareness in a world where many people have become indifferent to intrinsic quality and authentic flavour. With this book, we invite people to take notice, respect and become involved with the bigger story that links everything together, a story that we believe truly matters.

We hope that the testimonials in this book will offer insight to cheese professionals, chefs, cheese enthusiasts and foodies alike. We hope that these stories inspire everyone who loves cheese but has never considered its value, meaning, or potential. But above all, we hope that this book leaves you hungry for a piece of delicious, authentic cheese.

Giedo De Snijder and Frederic Van Tricht, September 2021



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Quantity: [illegible]
Date of Production: [illegible]
Lot Number: [illegible]
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Milk Treatment: [illegible]
Milk Fat Content: [illegible]
Milk Protein Content: [illegible]
Milk Solids Content: [illegible]
Milk Moisture Content: [illegible]



STICHELTON
the real King
of
English cheese

CHEESEMAKER

JOE SCHNEIDER

Stichelton Dairy Ltd

Founded in 2006

Cuckney, Nottinghamshire
UNITED KINGDOM

WWW.STICHELTON.CO.UK

THIS QUESTION OF HOW TO TRANSMIT THE KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE OF ONE GENERATION TO THE NEXT HAS FASCINATED ME EVER SINCE, FOR THIS IS THE ONLY REAL WAY TO PRESERVE THE TRADITIONS AND CRAFTSMANSHIP OF ARTISAN CHEESEMAKING.





BRITISH CHEESE TRADITION

I started my cheese making career as an American living in Holland making Greek cheese for a Turk, and many years later I am making a traditional blue cheese in the heart of England. So if I am asked what the cheese culture is like in my own country, that is a complex question for me to answer. I grew up in New York State, and the cheese we bought and ate in the 1970s and 80s came from a supermarket shelf in individually wrapped slices more akin to whipped oils than cheese. I was well into my twenties before I discovered that real Parmigiano didn't come out of a shiny green can. If there was a burgeoning artisanal cheese culture in America in the 1980s, it was invisible to me. It is certainly much different now. A new generation of American cheesemakers have travelled the world in search of knowledge and inspiration and have brought back what they learned to their farms in Wisconsin, Vermont or elsewhere. Some of the most interesting and delicious farmhouse cheeses in the world are now made in the US. I left those shores many years ago for the time-honoured tradition

of pursuing a woman (I have since caught her) all the way to the Netherlands. The cheese culture in Holland was so completely different from what I grew up with, and it afforded me the first glimpse of something I had been missing in my experience of cheese. I am now living in England, in great measure because of what was happening here with cheese twenty years ago.

Great Britain has an ancient and unique history of cheesemaking, but I am not a historian so I will limit my comments to the cheese culture that I found when I first visited here in 1995. The first time I visited the Neals Yard Dairy cheese shop in London in those early days, I was struck by all of the shelves laden with huge objects: beautiful cheeses round and tall with blue-grey rinds and pale centres, of all different shapes and sizes. Seeing whole cheeses like this, in their natural state, was a completely new experience for me. British cheese is shaped this way for historical reasons. Unlike our Continental counterparts that tended to be made and consumed locally, British cheeses spent more time on the roads, in the back of horse-drawn wagons travelling from the farms where they were made to markets in faraway towns and cities, so cheeses had to be robust and hardy, stackable and stable. Imagine trying to drive a wagon full of Brie on a five-day trip from Lancashire to London in July. You see this durable characteristic in most of the traditional territorials like Cheddar, Cheshire and Lancashire, and their immense size and sheer presence as objects make them unique in the cheese world. Another thing that beguiled me about the cheeses at Neals Yard Dairy was the way each one celebrated the tripartite relationship of tradition, place and person. The cheese there wasn't just a type, it was Montgomery's Cheddar, Mrs Kirkham's Lancashire, Appleby's Cheshire, all belonging to a place in history where time, geography and generations entwined. I had not seen this in my time living on the Continent – indeed, in many cases, the cheesemaker might be a closely guarded secret by the affineur or shop owner. This indicated to me something special about the British cheese culture at that time. British farmhouse cheesemaking has suffered a steady decline in the last hundred years for reasons that are well documented in the history books. Certainly the war contributed to this decline, because many family farms making interesting local varieties were forced to start making more commoditised cheese, or to send their milk to a factory making such cheese, to help the war effort. After the war, many of these traditional cheesemakers did not return to their craft, eschewing the hard and

often under appreciated work for a steady milk cheque from the newly formed Milk Marketing Board. Post-war technology also brought pasteurisation of cheese milk to the fore, and since the 1950s Britain followed on the coat tails of America's cult of hygiene and sterilisation, which viewed raw milk not as an expression of flavour and connection to the land but as a danger. Raw milk cheeses came very close to extinction in the 1980s with looming UK legislation that threatened a total ban on the use of unpasteurised milk, but these efforts to eradicate hundreds of years of Farmhouse cheesemaking traditions and culture were resisted by a handful of luminaries who fought against the misapprehension and fear informing food safety policy at the time. They have also been battling for years against the general indifference of the market to these culturally important cheeses, celebrating in their shops and market stalls the cheeses and the cheesemakers that embody the craft of transforming pasture into pleasure. This renaissance of British cheese was the culture I walked into and fell in love with in the late 1990s, and making a contribution to this noble endeavour has been my life's work ever since.

WHEN SCIENCE MEETS ART

My cheese-making journey began at a BBQ beside a canal in s'Hertogenbosch in the Netherlands, where I met a Turkish chap who was starting feta production to serve the large Turkish community in the Netherlands. We struck up a conversation and I was interested in what he was doing. I had a degree in Agricultural Engineering that I wasn't using and I needed a job, so I asked if I could come and help him make cheese. My cheese knowledge at this time was limited to eating it, so I bought any book I could find in English to learn about transforming milk into cheese. This brings me to one of the interesting experiences I have had in my attempts to learn the craft of cheesemaking: Where does one get the knowledge? There are certainly many books written about cheesemaking, from the intimidatingly technical to the more practical, but as I discovered when I became more interested in learning from real cheesemakers about their craft, the transmission of knowledge and experience is not always straightforward. I started visiting cheesemakers in Holland, Belgium, France and England, going anywhere that would allow me to come

for a few days or a few weeks, trying to convince them that my free, inexperienced labour would be more help than hinderance. I met some very wonderful people along the way who were very gracious with their time. Some of the cheesemakers were guarded with their knowledge, as if they suspected an attempt to try to steal some trade secrets. Others were very open, but in many cases I found that people who had been cheesemakers for many years and had a strong intuitive grasp of their craft found it much harder to articulate exactly what was happening in a technical way. This question of how to transmit the knowledge and experience of one generation to the next has fascinated me ever since, for this is the only real way to preserve the traditions and craftsmanship of artisan cheesemaking. Cheesemaking is a complex mix of good, hard empirical science and a bit of mystical alchemy, and this duality has always intrigued me. The exact science of the mechanics of rennet coagulation or starter propagation are there in the literature for anyone to access and understand. The science of cheesemaking is rich and fun to explore, but there is another side that is more nebulous, more to do with experience and knowledge in a way that is difficult to quantify. The expert cheesemakers I have met are not really using science when they use their nose to tell them if a cheese has ripened well, and though they understand what is happening below the surface of the setting milk, it is through the touch of their hands and by using their other senses that they are able to decide whether to cut the curd now or to wait. That is the craft, the art, and they marry up with science perfectly in artisan cheesemaking.



THE CHEESEMAKER AS SHEPHERD

When I started to intuit this duality in cheesemaking, I found the feta making, with pasteurised milk in a small factory, a bit one dimensional. I was attracted to those dark, humid caves I had visited in France, to the deeply satisfying mould growth on cheddar rinds I had seen growing in Somerset. I thought I knew the science part (turns out I didn't), and what I wanted more of was some of that magical alchemy. In the late 1990s, the UK was undergoing a renaissance of farmhouse cheesemaking, cheese selling and general cheese appreciation, so my



STILTON IS DIMINISHED
BECAUSE IT IS PROTECTED
BY EUROPEAN LEGISLATION,
THE RULES OF WHICH
STIPULATE THAT ONLY
PASTEURISED MILK CAN BE
USED. THIS IS A CORRUPTION
OF THE PURPOSE OF THE
PDO SCHEME, WHICH
SHOULD OSTENSIBLY
IDENTIFY AND PROTECT
REGIONALLY PRODUCED
TRADITIONAL FOODS.

gaze turned next to England to pursue a career in cheesemaking. I was invited to join a small Biodynamic farm in Sussex, where I would meet two people who had a profound effect on my philosophy of food and farming. Old Plawhatch Farm was run by Michael and Jayne Duveen, and they used raw milk from the farm's herd of Meuse-Rhine-Ijssel cattle to make cheese, yoghurt and cream. I learned about the vital connection of the land to the food that it produces, how terroir is transmitted from soil to grass, to the cow, to the udder, to the vat. The cheesemaker's role is one of shepherd, taking one of nature's most perfect foods and distilling it down to its most subtle essences without damaging its connection to the land, climate, meadows, animals or people from whence it comes. Even in those early days I aspired to make a cheese worthy of a place on the shelves of Neal's Yard Dairy with all those other great British Farmhouse territorials. In 2000, I started my second project in the UK with the Bamford family on their estate in the Cotswolds. They had a dairy farm, and Lady Bamford wanted to start using the milk for cheesemaking and to create The Daylesford Organic Farmshop for making and selling artisan food. I spent five wonderful years there, honing my craft, working beside impassioned bakers, chefs, farmers and growers who inspired me with their dedication to perfection. Without that experience, I doubt I would have had the confidence or the ability to set out on a journey in 2006 that started over a pint of beer in a pub in Borough Market in London, where Randolph plied me with drink and planted the idea in my head of resurrecting an extinct cheese. It is with the unique story of the extinction of traditional raw milk Stilton in England that my passion for raw milk cheese found perfect focus in the creation of Stichelton.

THE NEW KING OF ENGLISH CHEESE

Stilton has ostensibly been called the King of English cheese, and the story of what happened to Stilton is inextricably bound to the story of why Stichelton exists. To any young cheesemaker I meet, I dispense an unsolicited bit of wisdom. There is a fork in the road for any kind of food production, including cheese. You can go down the route of industrialised production, where ingredients are just inputs, and quality and flavour take a back seat to efficiency. Or you can produce food artisanally, with



your hands, with care for and attention to your ingredients, with only the goal of flavour and the pleasure of eating in mind. Many young people don't even know that the fork in the road exists, so I feel I've done my job in just pointing it out, restraining my evangelism and stopping short of telling them the direction they should take. But I am a cheese evangelist. If I look outside my window right now, I can see the grass in the fields that the cows are grazing, I can see the cloudy weather that hovers over the hill, and the cows eating and ruminating. What was grass yesterday is now part of the milk in the vat below my office, and this morning I walked over to the parlour and chatted with Graham, who milks the cows, decides what they will eat and how much, and chooses what grasses he wants to plant for them. He loves cows and he is in a good mood this morning despite the freezing weather, so I think the milk will be good today. All of these connections go into the flora of the milk: the climate, soil, grass, the barns and the men who tend these animals and milk them all contribute to the character and potential of that milk to be deliciously transformed into cheese, an emblematic ambassador of place. If you pasteurise that milk, kill everything good in it with heat,

then you cut all of those connections. You are no longer tied to the land and you are working with an indifferent substrate of fat and protein that could have come from anywhere. Such milk is wholly uninteresting to me. Using your own raw milk to make cheese is essential, but in the late 1980s, the very last raw milk Stilton was made and then became extinct. This is not hyperbole, so I will repeat that traditional raw milk Stilton made on a farm with raw milk is extinct. Randolph Hodgson saw this situation as an egregious affront to the rich history and tradition of British cheese, and, in 2004, sought to address this travesty.

Stichelton is not a Stilton. All Stilton is made with pasteurised milk, and may contain cranberries, nuts, or even a banana if you like, but it cannot be made on a farm with raw milk. Stichelton is made only with our own raw milk and does not harbour fruit or nuts of any kind. Stilton is diminished because it is protected by European legislation called a PDO (Protection of Designation of Origin), the rules of which stipulate that only pasteurised milk can be used. This is a corruption of the purpose of the PDO scheme, which should ostensibly identify and protect regionally produced traditional foods. In the case of

the Stilton PDO, instead of protecting small producers and demonstrating adherence to authentic and traditional methods of production, the current PDO affords market protection to a small cartel of very large Stilton producers. The PDO is not inclusive of a community of traditional cheesemakers, it is an intentional barrier to entry for small producers so that the market share can be controlled by a handful of large companies. This raises the question to whom does a PDO belong? If a nation or community has a long tradition of producing a cheese in their region, who owns this tradition? Should our food culture be owned by all of us or by corporations? These corporations may not even have existed when these traditions started, but now they control all aspects of their production. If you understand the importance of this question then you are in our tribe.

SLOW CHEESE

The corruption of the PDO system is a major barrier for any small producers wishing to make a farmhouse Stilton because they will not be able to sell the cheese under the Stilton name unless they pasteurise the milk. Despite these impediments, we decided to persevere with our project to explore the traditional methods of producing this historic British cheese on a farm with raw milk. When we began, we had a rough idea of the type of recipe we wanted to follow – after all, we weren't reinventing the wheel – but the knowledge and experience of making this type of cheese using raw milk was long gone by the time we started, so it has taken years of trial and error to learn how best to make Stichelton. The primary difficulty in making our cheese is that the recipe is very sensitive to initial conditions. Stichelton is unlike most other British territorials in that it is a long, slow make over 24 hours with an acidity development curve of a snail's pace. This long, slow acidity development is what gives the milk the time it needs to fully express its flavour potential, but it also leaves the cheese vulnerable to all sorts of problems along the way. Other recipes afford much more opportunity to influence the make through stirring, heating, curd manipulation and so on, and are made in much shorter periods of time so changes can take place along the way if the acidity or drainage is too fast or too slow. Stichelton is uniquely challenging in this regard and great care is needed in

setting up the initial conditions because once the curd is cut there is very little the cheesemaker can do to control these factors. He has far fewer tools in the toolbox to use than makers of other types of cheese, fewer buttons and levers as it were. I like to use the analogy of the sport of curling, where the aim is to get the stone to land in a small circle many meters away down the length of the ice. The curler must set up the exact speed and direction needed to get the stone to stop exactly where he wants it to, but once the stone is released there is nothing left to be done (we are ignoring the hilarious sweeping efforts to bolster our example). This is much like Stichelton making: we must set up the exact homeopathic amount of starter, get the temperature of the milk to its optimum, add just the right amount of rennet and wait for the curd to be perfectly set for cutting, but after this point there is little else we can do and all that remains is to go home for a good night's sleep and come the next morning to see if everything has turned out well, to see where our stone has landed. We don't go through all of this agony for nothing. It is essential to allow a long, slow development of acidity, coupled with a gentle but unhindered drainage of the curd, in order to get the most flavour out of our milk. Add too much starter and you mask the natural organisms in our milk. Squeeze out too much moisture too quickly and you have a drier, harder cheese tasting mostly of starter. Add too little and you get a wet, weak cheese that will collapse on the shelves before it has time to develop deep flavour. Such sensitivity to tiny changes in the recipe requires an empathy with the changes occurring almost weekly in the milk. We have to work closely with the herd manager to stay on top of these seasonal fluctuations in the milk. All factors – what the cows are eating, the season of the year, their stage in lactation – change the behaviour of the milk and add to the complexity of making Stichelton. At the end of the day we are bacteria farmers, and every season offers up a different harvest of flora in the milk that we must anticipate and respond to in our day-to-day decisions. Cheeses made in late summer and autumn, when the fat content of the milk is high because the cows are on good, fresh grass with stable dry matter contents, will be faster ripening, sweeter, full of soft syrupy nectar. Winter cheeses will be tighter, drier, longer to break down and hence more lactic, savoury, meaty. Supermarkets would call this variability inconsistent, but I enjoy the different personalities of Stichelton as the seasons change because it expresses the natural rhythm of the farm throughout the year.

A COMMUNION OF LAND AND TIME

The other cheesemakers and cheesemongers who I love working with care deeply about this expression of their milk. Being connected in this way to people who understand the vital importance of preserving our cultural heritage in food and farming makes me feel that what we are attempting to do is worthwhile. Everywhere in the cheese world I encounter little acts of care and dedication that inspire me. I have a cheesemaking friend whose grandmother would scold him as a lad if he splashed any milk whilst tipping the churn into the vat because he was damaging the milk. Another friend only makes his cheese whilst his cows are out on pasture because he believes the best cheese must come from cows fed on fresh grass. A third generation cheddar maker I know has a store room that is like a cathedral of cheddar. He has big farmer's hands that would be just as comfortable around a welder as a cheese iron. He knows his farm and land intimately, understands the vitality of his cows and the quality of their milk which now lives in the piece of cheese he is holding for us to taste and smell as we stand together. You cannot help but be moved by the beauty of the connections this simple act embodies. It is a communion of land and time transformed and shared with us. A profoundly human gift. Hundreds of cheese shops around the world are inspired by such beauty too. Everyone we sell our cheese to gets it. They are ambassadors who value the integrity that goes into a special cheese that is made by impassioned people from the fruits of their own land, and their mission is simply one of sharing this with others.

FROM CHEESE TO CHURCH

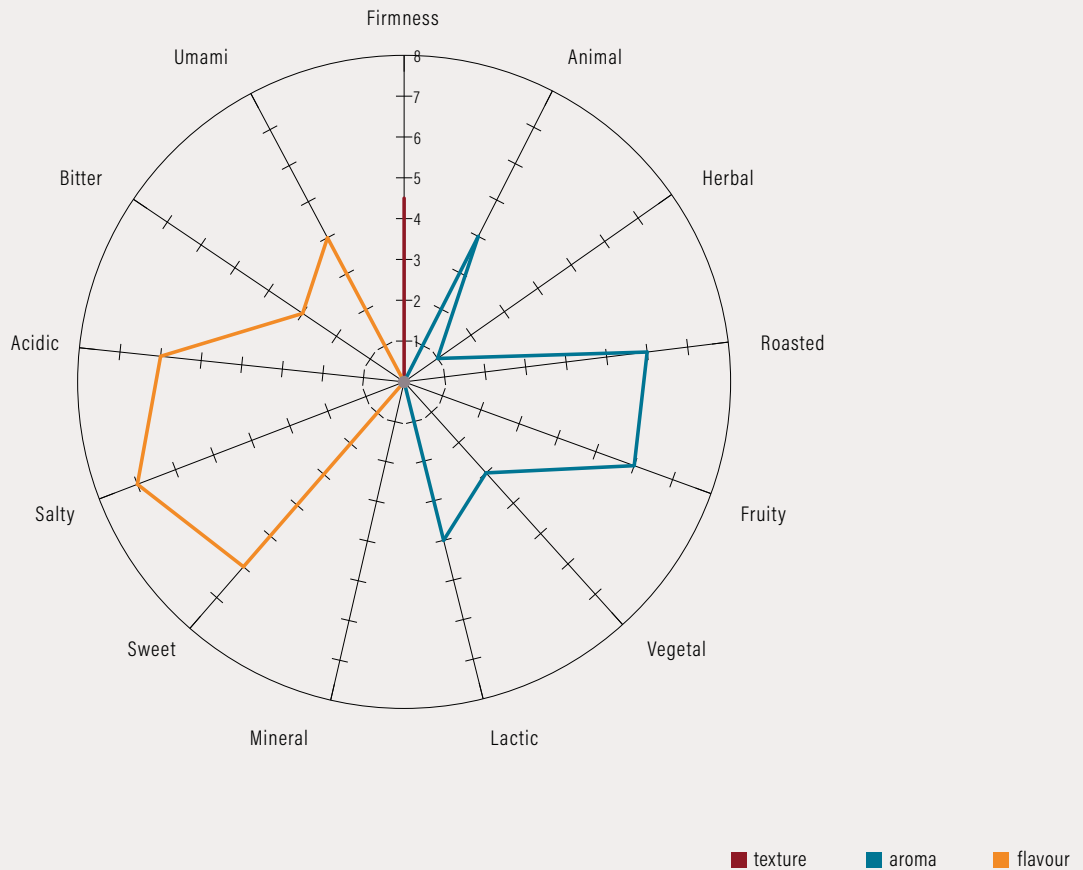
I've used the word craft quite a bit above. Cheesemaking is a craft, made by craftspeople. It takes dedication, skill, a willingness to learn, and perseverance. Have you ever visited an ancient church and gazed at the stones or intricate woodwork that some craftsman put there hundreds of years ago? If I do my job right, if I make delicious authentic cheese that is honest and carries the integrity of the traditions of real cheesemaking at its heart, if it brings pleasure to people so they spend their lives seeking out real cheese and teaching their children about good food, then in hundreds of years after I am gone, people will still be able to eat raw milk farmhouse cheeses and that will be the church I helped to build.

TASTE PROFILE

STICHELTON

Stichelton Dairy

English blue veined cheese similar to blue Stilton but made from raw cow's milk



TEXTURE	SOFT AND BUTTERY
DOMINANT FLAVOURS	WALNUTS GRAPEFRUIT TOAST, BRIOCHE, BISCUITS CARAMEL MEAT BROTH SMOKED DAIRY PRODUCTS BUTTER
SUBTLE NOTES	MOULD, HUMUS EARTHY TONES GREEN APPLE WET WOOL
WINE TIPS	FORTIFIED RED WINE (VIN DOUX NATUREL) e.g. type Porto or Banyuls

