

inviting ideas

It's cheese, butter and fondue!



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That old food trend pendulum is swinging - looks like 1997 will be the start of the reappearance of cheese, butter and fondue. Where is my beaded headband and bell bottoms?

Olestra is on its way out ... butter is on its way back in.

Cheese is shedding its bad rap, and fondue pots are finding their way out of storage boxes. We are heading back to moderation, moderation, moderation - eating fresh, delicious, rich foods, but in monitored, sensible amounts.

The early '70s for me, meant - week-ends away in wonderful nearby Toronto. My friends busy buying clothes on York and Yonge Streets, my big find - the Kensington Market's Cheese Shops. In those days Jarlsberg was hot on the scene with no concern attached to cheese and fat content.

Today, we cautiously buy cheese, as the fat alarm goes off in our heads and our hand instantly retracts from the small wheel of brie that tempts our taste buds. Now the camembert's, triple creams and chevres have joined the shelves with "American processed." Low-fat and no-fat cheeses come in every color, shape and flavor - getting them to melt is another issue. CHEESE as we knew it - HAS GOTTEN A BAD RAP!!

Swing with the trend pendulum, enjoy cheese and remember, it doesn't have to be eaten as a one-pound wedge! Enjoy those English and European cheeses with a hunk of crusty bread and a fabulous glass of wine - make a delicious fondue - just limit your intake!

Informational notes on cheese:

Stilton - English, made from cow's milk, blue-veined with an undertone of Cheddar, crumbly in texture, more mellow than other blues. In England, Stilton remains appropriate at any meal.

Eaten with biscuits and served with a glass of fine port - add a tart apple to make a perfect dessert!

Jarlsberg - Norwegian, made from cow's milk, a firm cheese - Swiss in appearance, buttery-light-tangy flavor. Perfect for a cheese board - not too distinctive, appealing to most palates.

Brie - French, made from cow's milk, soft-ripened, creamy, mild and buttery in flavor. Delicious baked in puff pastry (home-made or prepared) and served as an appetizer or after the main course.

Camembert - French, made from cow's milk, soft-ripened, creamy, more tangy than a brie. Like other soft-ripened cheeses, serve at room temperature - with a selection of biscuits and fruit.

Chevre - French, made from goat's milk, creamy and easily spreadable, usually a mild tangy flavor - depending on the brand and age. As it ages, it becomes stronger. Delicious on sliced baguettes, served with plump sun-dried tomatoes and a fresh basil leaf or baked in a tomato coulis served with crostini or herbed focaccia (and of course, delicious on pizza).

Emmentaler - (Emmenthaler or Emmentaler) - is named after the district (Emme Valley) where it is made. A very difficult cheese to make - and only made from a very high quality milk. Besides skill, this cheese decides when it will ripen. The flavor is often likened to that of hazelnuts and walnuts - with a subtle sweet quality.

This cheese is often used in fondue.

If you don't have an old fondue pot, new ones are still available - Le Creuset has three beauties; the new model - Traditionnelle Fondue - complete with burner, cast iron stand, pot, and six wood-handled fondue forks, Contemporary Fondue 9 pc. set, Compact Fondue 8 pc. set, all three sets are enamel over cast iron, just like all of their other wonderful products, with a warranty for 101 years - Prices range from \$109.99 to \$134.99. Le Creuset is available at The Kitchen Glamour Shops, Hudson's, Kitchen Port (in Ann Arbor) and

Williams-Sonoma (catalog only). Bed, Bath and Beyond carries two fondue models by Roshco - one porcelain enamel over steel or a plain stainless steel fondue. Occasionally you can find fondue pots (even Le Creuset) at T.J. Maxx and Marshall's in the gift-ware section.

If you want to try a fondue appetizer, meal, or dessert before investing in the equipment (or just want to go out to try fondue) - La Fondue is located at 111 S. Main Street in Royal Oak. Hours: Sunday 4-8 p.m., Mon.-Thurs. 5-10 p.m., Fri. and Sat. 5-11 p.m. Prices: appetizers are from: \$3.95 to \$4.50 per person, entrees: \$10.95 to \$13.95, and dessert (white or milk chocolate fondue) \$3.95 per person.

Another cheesy idea is a raclette. Typically Swiss in tradition, the raclette is similar in concept to the fondue (at least from the melted cheese aspect). This is the perfect time of year to plan this kind of meal - toasty, tasty, warming foods. Raclette cheese (Wisconsin Swiss will do - but traditionally any Valaisian Alpine cheese is used - today usually Gomser and Bagnes) melted and accompanied by potatoes, gherkins and pickled onions.

Official raclette pans can be purchased at the Kitchen Glamour stores and other specialty kitchen shops, or you can improvise and utilize any pan over a gentle fire. The term raclette is an old one, it comes from the French word racier which means to scrape.

Here is a real basic Swiss fondue recipe - make sure to serve your cheese fondue with crusty breads, hard fruits or crispy vegetables:

Heat a dry white wine and freshly squeezed lemon juice (several teaspoons, or as much as you desire for flavor) in your fondue pot - wait until it's steamy. Add some minced garlic. Whisk in a mixture of shredded cheeses (usually Emmentaler and Gruyere - if a third cheese is added, it's generally Swiss). *Tip: lightly flour cheeses so they don't stick to one another. Stir in some Kirsch and add some freshly

ground black pepper and freshly ground nutmeg - stir constantly.

Fondue Tips:

- Plan on one cup of fondue per person.
- Make sure when dipping, you use your own long handled fondue fork (most commercial forks have colored dots on the end for easy identification).
- If the fondue is too thin, add more shredded cheese and mix thoroughly.
- If your Sterno heat source is too hot, cap it and use a tea candle or just reheat when necessary.
- If fondue is too thick, thin it out with additional splash of white wine.
- Cider can be used as a liquid in your fondue.
- Make sure the wine you are using is not too aged.
- Continue to stir fondue during the meal to keep it creamy and well mixed.
- Make sure the bread, fruit or vegetables you serve with your fondue are bite-size.
- Keep in mind, the fondue is as good as the cheeses used.
- Proportions are your choice - general rule: 1 1/2 cups wine to 3 cups of cheese.
- Fondue can be made of chocolate (your favorite kind - with or without liqueur) and served with slices of fruit.

LE CREUSET'S FONDUE AU CHOCOLAT*

Break 7 ounces of chocolate into pieces. Place chocolate, grated rind of 1 orange, and 1/4 pint cream in fondue pot. Heat over low heat on top of stove. Stir till chocolate melts. Place fondue pot on stand over flame. Skewer sliced, fresh fruit and dip.

* From Le Creuset's Fondue Book - Le Creuset Fondue Book, \$15.00 available at any Le Creuset authorized dealer.

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Design center sample sale this weekend furnishes savings

Michigan Design Center, home to the finest interior furnishings from the world's premier manufacturers, will have its semi-annual floor sample sale 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 18, and noon to 5 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 19.

Shoppers will find savings of 60 to 70 percent off list prices on hundreds of floor sample items from the showrooms.

MDC is at 1700 Stutz Drive in Troy, north off Maple between Crooks and Coolidge. Open to the trade only, MDC will be open to the public for this special sale only.

Admission is \$4, with a portion of the proceeds going to benefit COTS, the Coalition On Temporary Shelter. COTS is the largest shelter for homeless men,

women and children in Michigan.

Merchandise will be sold as is, and all sales are final. Payment may be made by cash or check, with some showrooms accepting Visa or MasterCard. A delivery service will be available, and arrangements can be made at the customer's expense. Delivery must be accepted within 10 days.

All items will be displayed and sold in the participating showrooms or in special sale areas. Remaining showrooms will be closed but lighted for window viewing. COTS will sponsor light refreshments and beverages for a nominal charge.

MDC's "Designer On Call" interior designers will be available.