

Cheese & Wine Anytime



Cheese and wine have been natural partners for centuries, but they've never been more "in" than now! With today's time schedules, friends often gather informally for an evening of wine and cheese tasting, which may include cheese hors d'oeuvres and snacks to fill out a light repast.

The choice of wines for a tasting is important, but spend just as much time on the selection of cheeses to have a basis for tasting and comparison.

Your cheese tray could feature an array of the classic types of cheeses produced in this country—monterey jack, muenster, brick, blue, Swiss, and colby. To show the increasing development of flavor which results from aging, you could offer a sampling of natural cheddar cheeses ranging from mild to extra sharp.

When you select wines to accompany cheeses, the basic principle is that the flavors should enhance, not overpower each other. A mild cheese will be accented by a light Chablis or fresh rosé, while a flavorful cheese such as sharp cheddar calls for a full-bodied Burgundy or California pinot noir.

To save last-minute duties, your cheese tray may be assembled ahead of time, wrapped tightly in moisture-proof wrap to prevent drying, and refrigerated. For eye appeal, cut the cheeses in different ways. Cheddar adapts well to slicing; Swiss cheese may be cut in cubes or sticks; and the cylindrical colby midget longhorn may be cut to form an attractive, easily-served spiral. Since cheese should usually be served at room temperature for maximum flavor, remove the cheese tray from the refrigerator at least an hour before sampling time, and uncover just before serving.

In planning quantities, remember that the greater variety of cheese and wine you serve, the more you'll need to allow each guest an adequate sampling. For the wines, a tasting portion is about one to two ounces, so estimate 12-15 servings per bottle and at least one-half bottle per person, depending on the number of wines. If you were serving four wines to twelve people, you would probably need two bottles of each.

For the cheese, estimate between a quarter and a half pound per person—again, the greater the variety of cheeses you offer, the more you'll need. Feel free to be generous—leftover cheese keeps well and can be used in a number of ways.

Light cheese dishes are the perfect way to cap an evening of cheese and wine tasting. Serve a beautiful layered spread of grated cheddar cheese, cranberry-orange relish, whipped cream and cream cheese, with glasses of a light rosé or riesling. A California-style fondue made with natural monterey jack cheese might call for a fruity Gamay Beaujolais. Experiment with new flavor combinations, but most of all—have fun!

MONTEREY FONDUE

- 2 cups (8 ozs.) shredded natural monterey jack cheese
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 1 cup white wine
- 1 tablespoon chopped parsley
- Vegetables for dipping

Toss cheese with flour. Heat wine in fondue pot or saucepan until bubbles rise to the surface. Do not boil. Add cheese mixture, 1/2 cup at a time. Stir constantly, letting cheese melt completely before adding more. Continue stirring until mixture bubbles lightly. Stir in parsley. Keep fondue bubbling gently while serving. Serve with raw vegetables.

LACY CHEESE DISCS

Cut cheese horizontally into 1/4-inch slices. Turn upright; cut vertically into quarters. Place cheese quarters 2 to 3 inches apart on Teflon-lined cookie sheet. Bake at 350°, 10 minutes. Remove from cookie sheet immediately; drain on absorbent paper.

Variation: To make curled cheese appetizers; prepare as directed. Remove from cookie sheet by rolling disc around handle of wooden spoon. Drain on absorbent paper.

LAYERED CRANBERRY CHEDDAR SPREAD

- 1 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese
- 2 tablespoons sherry
- 1 cup heavy cream, whipped
- 1 10-oz. pkg. frozen cranberry-orange relish, thawed
- 3 cups (12 oz.) shredded sharp natural cheddar cheese

Combine softened cream cheese and sherry; fold in whipped cream. Layer relish, cheddar cheese and cream cheese mixture in 1-1/2-quart clear glass container. Garnish with additional cheddar cheese, if desired. Serve with crackers or fruit wedges.

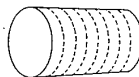
CHEESE OPORTO

- 1 cup (4 ozs.) shredded sharp natural cheddar cheese
- 1 cup (4 ozs.) shredded natural Swiss cheese
- 2 tablespoons soft margarine
- 2 tablespoons port

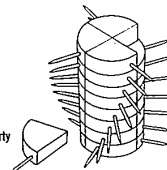
Combine all ingredients, mixing until smooth and well blended. Press into 10-ounce custard cup lined with plastic wrap. Chill until firm. Unmold and garnish with chopped nuts, if desired. Serve as a spread for crackers, bread or fruit.

COLBY SPIRAL

1. Cut a 16-ounce midget longhorn style natural colby cheese crosswise into 8 slices.



2. Turn upright and cut vertically into quarters.



3. Serve with party picks.

CHEESE & WINE Sampler

- Colby—Ruby Cabernet
- Sharp Cheddar—Burgundy, Dry Sherry
- Mild Cheddar—Zinfandel, Rosé
- Swiss—Chablis, Riesling
- Monterey Jack—Gamay Beaujolais, Rhine Wine
- Brick—Rosé
- Muenster—Pinot Chardonnay
- Gouda—Riesling, Port
- Camembert—Cabernet Sauvignon
- Roquefort or Blue—Pinot Noir