

# FLORIDA

INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE

## SAY CHEESE PLEASE

BY MARGIT BISZTRAY

### STATEWIDE GAL

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**& GALLERISTS AT**

**EXCLUSIVE:**  
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**& TABLETOP**  
**ALTERNATIVE**  
**INVESTMENTS**

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As we head into the holiday season, cuisine's most delicious accident continues to delight palates with newer, more exotic varieties and ingenious preparations at restaurants throughout the state

Today it boasts its own festivals, protected recipes, specialty boutiques and separate courses. It gets invited to all the best parties, earns medals and is considered a perfect match for some of the world's finest wines. Who would guess that cheese had lowly beginnings and was actually recognized by accident?

### MADE IN AMERICA

And speaking of local: American cheeses, made in small batches, by hand, in the traditional, European way with raw milk, have been winning awards for their excellence. In 2007, at the annual World Cheese Awards in England there were 250 American-made cheeses among 2,000 entries from 600 makers. Among the winners were Beecher's Flagship Reserve, Rogue River Blue, Marin French Gold and cheeses from Fiscalini. No longer the name of a rubbery, tasteless, peel-off slice, American cheese is a gourmet delight.

Chef Patrick Duff of Acqua at the Four Seasons in Miami confidently lists Mt. Tam — an organic triple cream made by the famed Cowgirl Creamery in California — as well as a goat cheese from the Goat's Leap Farms in Napa, alongside such imported specialties as Idiazabal, an unpasteurized, pressed cheese from the Basque region of Spain.

The traditional cheese plate is presented in order from mildest to strongest, starting at 12 o'clock on the plate and moving clockwise. It should contain a variety of goat, sheep, and cow milk cheeses. Better quality plates will contain "farmstead" (made on one farm by the very person who raises and milks the animal) and/or "artisan" (made from milk from several, local farms) selections. What accompanies the cheese is another characteristic that sets the plate apart, but it will usually include fruit and nuts, and sometimes crackers or bread. This changes during the holidays a bit as figs are added to the equation. For a cheese plate all in one bite, cheese fruit — a new creation of tapioca and Parmesan infused with figs, strawberries, apricots and plums — can be ordered blast frozen for next day delivery from bigchefonline.com.

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