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BREAD PUDDING

With a chocolate
and cheese difference

shrimp on the menu
is a customer favorite

ancient grains
take well to modern ways

tease the appetite *with an apéritif*



SWEET & SAVORY



*Cheese adds tangy
notes to dessert.*

BY CAROLYN WALKUP

CHEESE sweet and savory

Cheese plates have long been served for dessert to diners who don't particularly fancy sweet flavors. But those diners and others now enjoy more desserts than ever that incorporate savory cheeses of various kinds combined with sweeter dessert ingredients.

Chefs and pastry chefs everywhere are discovering that artisanal cheeses, often produced close to home, can provide just the right amount of tanginess to desserts.

IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

"Depending on the source of the ingredients, you can take something that is ordinary and make it extraordinary," says Melinda Dorn, pastry chef at L'Etoile and Graze in Madison, Wis.

Exclusively using cheeses from Wisconsin cheesemakers, Dorn often finds those she can feature as specials. She sources cheeses from all over the state, with the farthest creamery about four hours away and the closest within an hour's drive.

One dessert she sometimes does at the white-tablecloth L'Etoile is Capri Fromage Blanc Panna Cotta. The grass-fed creamy cheese contains a combination of goat's milk, sheep's milk and cow's milk and has the texture of cream cheese. She likes to buy it in bulk and freeze it for later use.

Graze, the more casual restaurant next door, usually has a housemade cheesecake that Dorn makes with Wisconsin cream cheese, and tiramisu made with BelGioioso mascarpone from Denmark, Wis., topped with a seasonal fruit puree.

Area Four, a bakery, cafe and restaurant in Cambridge, Mass., also does a cheesecake, but with a Vermont Coulommiers, similar to brie, mixed with cream cheese to achieve the right consistency. "It has richness, but is a little lighter than traditional cheesecake and the finish is savory," explains Katie Kimble, pastry chef. She tops the cheesecake with Medjool dates in a sherry reduction.

At Lucy Restaurant & Bar in Yountville, Calif., in the heart of Napa Valley, Victor Scargle, executive chef, uses California cheeses in several desserts in collaboration with Tedd Romero, pastry chef.

Scargle especially likes fresh whole-milk fromage blanc from Cowgirl Creamery, Point Reyes Station, Calif., which he describes as "almost like a ricotta. It has a strong tang without adding acid, so it's really good for a little bit of sweetness, but not over the top." One of his winter desserts is a Meyer lemon cake with a fromage blanc sherbet. "It's like a cheese plate and dessert all in one," Scargle says.

He sometimes does a dessert crêpe with a soft cheese called Cowabunga from Bohemian Creamery in Sebastopol, Calif. The cheese is a combination of fresh cow's milk, goat's milk and caramel,



Top to bottom: Melinda Dorn offers this Capri Fromage Blanc Panna Cotta at L'Etoile, made with a grass-fed, creamy cheese of goat's milk, sheep's milk and cow's milk. At Area Four, Katie Kimble uses two products from Vermont Farmstead Cheese Company: Lillé, a Coulommiers similar to brie that is combined with cream cheese in a cheesecake; and this raw-milk cheese, similar to a British Wensleydale, baked into the dough of an Apple WindsorDale Galette.

Left: Warm double-chocolate brioche bread pudding from Bradley Ogden is topped with a generous dollop of triple crème brie sabayon from Marin French Cheese Company.

CHEESE sweet and savory



Top to bottom: Bradley Ogden's orange/vanilla crêpe is filled with a blend of Bellwether Farms Carmody cheese—similar to a creamy cheddar—honey and vanilla. Meyer lemon cake at Lucy Restaurant & Bar is served with sherbet made with whole-milk fromage blanc from Cowgirl Creamery.

or *cajeta*. Scargle blends the cheese with apples or pears, tangerine zest and caramel sauce.

An orange/vanilla crêpe filled with a blend of Carmody cheese from Bellwether Farms, Sonoma, Calif., honey and vanilla is just one of several desserts that Bradley Ogden, co-founder of Lark Creek Restaurant Group in San Francisco, has created. Carmody is similar to a creamy cheddar.

Salted caramel, that popular combination that continues to be in vogue after several years, makes an appearance in a parfait at Butcher & the Boar in Minneapolis. Jack Riebel, chef/partner, and pastry chef Sarah Botcher layer salted caramel with Wisconsin mascarpone, creme fraiche, chocolate pudding and chopped roasted peanuts in a tall Collins glass.

Riebel gets his mascarpone from Crave Brothers Farmstead Cheese in Waterloo, Wis. "Wisconsin puts out some of the best cheese in the country," he says.

BREAD BASKET

Sweet/savory waffle sandwiches are technically an entree at Bel 50, a new restaurant in Chicago, which divides its primarily waffle sandwich menu into savory and sweet choices. A few sandwiches, though, are hard to categorize.

Take the prosciutto/brie/fig jam/caramelized red onion, for example. "It hits five flavors—sweet, salty, sour, bitter and umami," says Joey Altman, director of culinary development. The cheese is a domestic 45% double-cream brie.

A couple of other sweet/savory waffle sandwich fillings that Altman is developing are a Wisconsin blue cheese with caramelized apples and one that uses a creamy, mild Italian-style Crescenza or stracchino from Bellwether Farms with roasted pears, honey, black pepper and sherry vinegar, and extra virgin olive oil.

Popovers are another bread-like dish that can be made either sweet or savory. Chef Derek Simcik at Atwood Café in Chicago incorporates his sense of humor into the name of the Stinking Bishop Popover, a dessert rendition stuffed with brandied cherries and Stinking Bishop cheese, a soft washed-rind cheese with a distinctive smell, which is produced by Charles Martell & Son Ltd., Dymock, Gloucestershire, England.

Simcik first bakes the popovers. When they're out of the oven, he inserts some of the cherry mixture, which includes a balsamic/chocolate reduction, into the hollow space inside. He then briefly heats the popover just until the cheese melts. The cherries and other flavors subdue the odor that the cheese would emit if simply cut and placed on a cheese plate, Simcik says.

Cheese can be baked into the dough crust for pies, tarts or galettes. At Area Four, Kimble bakes a raw-milk cheese similar to a British Wensleydale, made by Vermont Farmstead Cheese Company, South Woodstock, Vt., into the dough of an Apple

WindsorDale Galette inspired by an 1800s recipe. The galette is served warm with whipped cream or ice cream.

Corporate chef Evan Topel of Emmi Roth USA, Monroe, Wis., juliennes either his company's reserve aged Gruyere or Raclette into the center of a mincemeat-style filling in tarts so that it melts into the surrounding fruit mix just before service. The fruit mix usually contains sliced apples, rum and a spice mixture of cloves, nutmeg and cinnamon. The tarts can be prepared ahead of time, chilled, and held until service.

In addition to the longtime pairing of cheese with apples and other fruit, cheese and chocolate has been a winning combination.

Topel adds stout to his brownie mix and tops the baked bars with a raspberry or tart-cherry compote, then mini-cubes of Emmi Roth's Vintage Van Gogh double-cream aged Gouda. The finishing touch is a drizzle of caramel sauce and a dash of sea salt. An apple slice can be added as a garnish.

Lark Creek Restaurant Group's Ogden tops his warm double-chocolate brioche pudding with a generous dollop of triple crème brie sabayon. Marin French Cheese Company, Petaluma, Calif., produces this brie, which it named Rouge et Noir. ■



At Graze, Melinda Dorn's housemade cheesecake is made with Wisconsin cream cheese.

CAROLYN WALKUP, BASED IN CHICAGO, HAS COVERED ALL ASPECTS OF THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY FOR MANY YEARS FOR A VARIETY OF MEDIA.