

Thanksgiving Cheese Plate Inspiration

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Each September the Big E Fair is held in Springfield, MA, and for the past three years Molly Hopper has been invited to help a panel of six judges choose the best cheeses from a selection of over 150 from across the US. Hopper, who oversees the cheese program at [Eastern Standard](#) decided that she wanted to recreate the judging process at Eastern Standard.

How the Winners were Chosen

The staff of the Eastern Standard and moderators David Seaton of [Formaggio Kitchen](#) and Abby Gregory of [Stir](#) gathered together in early October to taste over 40 cheeses. These cheese covered everything from hard-to-find hand-crafted and artisan cheeses, to mass-produced super market varieties. The cheeses were scored on flavor, aroma, visual appearance, and texture. From over 40 cheeses, 14 were tasty enough to progress to the "Best in Show" round of judging. Only five cheeses made the cut:



- **Brebis Ossau** (*Ossau Valley, France*): A sheep's milk cheese handmade in the French mountain region of Pyrénées-Atlantiques with a firm texture and mild, sweet flavor
- **Twig Farm Square** (*Twig Farm, Vermont*): A bright tasting semi-soft goat's milk cheese aged for 80 days
- **Marieke Gouda** (*Holland's Family Farm, Wisconsin*): Made by Dutch expats in Wisconsin, this rich, nutty cheese is made in the traditional style of Dutch "Boerenkaas" gouda
- **Taleggio D.O.P.** (*Lombardy, Italy*): Described as a "killer example of an Italian classic" by the staff, this soft, funky wash-rind cow's milk cheese has earned Italy's Denominazione di Origine Protetta designation, reserved for regional products made using traditional methods
- **Cambozola Black Label** (*Allgäu, Germany*): This creamy brie-style cow's milk blue cheese has the barest hint of blue veining and boasts a buttery, savory flavor

You don't need a panel of experts to create a fabulous cheese plate of your own though. Use the winners of the Eastern Standard judging as inspiration for your cheese plate. Or, have friends and family be the judges: tag your cheeses with numbers rather than names and let guests vote on their favorite. Be sure to get feedback on what they liked or disliked about each cheese before unveiling the identities of the winners and losers.

If you want the results of the judging without the effort, Eastern Standard has created a fantastic cheese board from their juried tasting. The top five cheeses can be sampled during lunch and dinner service at Eastern Standard. Guests can order three selections or all five, served with toasted baguette and housemade accoutrements (olive oil tapenade, thyme & white wine poached grapes and spiced nuts).

http://www.culturecheesemag.com/blog/community-culture/restaurant-happenings/thanksgiving-cheese-plate-inspiration?utm_source=cheese%2C+the+word+on+culture+November&utm_campaign=CTW+October+2012&utm_medium=email