



CHEESE PLATES



Choosing The Cheeses

The perfect cheese plate should include a mix of fresh, aged, soft and hard cheeses, arranged in the order in which they should be tasted: from the lightest and freshest to the ripest and most intense.

There's no question that the best place shop for cheeses is a specialty cheese shop. You'll find the greatest variety and the best quality; moreover, you can get assistance from the cheesemonger behind the counter who will be able answer your questions. Still, many chain grocers have very good cheese selections, and often someone on staff can give you assistance in tailoring cheese to your occasion. Discount grocery stores can also be a good source - just keep your eyes open for cheese bargains.

Some cheese types to add to your plate might include:

Soft Cheeses

Includes cottage cheese, cream cheese, ricotta, brie, bleu, roquefort, mozzarella, meunster and similar cheeses. These cheeses generally pair well with fruit or meats, or can be used as breakfast cheeses in an omelette or as pasta fillings. They are usually mildly flavored and very high in moisture.

Semi-Soft Cheeses

American, Colby, Colby-Jack and similar cheeses are in the semi-soft category. These are slightly stronger in flavor and cover a wide range of uses. Colby-Jack cheese, a blend of Colby and Monterey Jack, is one of the most popular. This allows the sharper flavor of Colby to be combined with the milder Jack cheese, and also melts better than plain Colby. Grilled cheese sandwiches often use American cheese, and Mexican cheeses such as Asadero and Quesa Fresca are becoming more popular.

Semi-Hard Cheeses

Semi-hard cheese has an even bolder flavor than semi-soft, and is often paired with fruit, used on cheese trays and eaten with crackers. Cheeses in this category include Cheddar, Provolone, Gouda, Jarlsberg and others. Cheese in this category may come in a smoked variety. Smoked Cheddar and Gouda are very common

Hard Cheeses

Include Parmesan, Romano, Asiago, Swiss, Gruyere and others. Parmesan and romano are most familiar as the grated powder used to top spaghetti, but they are also used as accompaniments for fruit, wine, nuts and other appetizer items. Swiss is a popular sandwich cheese and melts well, unlike some other hard cheeses.