



**For Immediate Release
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CELEBRATE NEW YEAR'S EVE IN STYLE WITH CHEESES OF FRANCE
Acclaimed Cheese Expert Max McCalman Offers Recommendations

Portland, ME - A big New Year's Eve bash doesn't suit everyone. For a simple yet elegant evening, gather a few friends for good conversation, sparkling champagne and a carefully chosen selection of cheeses.



France produces a remarkable diversity of cheeses made from goat, sheep and cow's milk. There are hundreds of French favorites to choose from, so acclaimed cheese expert and James Beard winner Max McCalman, author of "The Cheese Plate," and "Cheese, a Connoisseur's Guide to the World's Best," has made it easy. He's prepared a celebratory plate that's designed to make your New Year's gathering a memorable one.

"Cheeses that come from Champagne and surrounding regions pair beautifully with this special wine," says McCalman. "They create a sparkling sensation when presented together." The Champagne Plate includes a Pyramid Goat, Clacbitou, Brie and Langres.

Pyramid Goat: This goat's milk cheese was a favorite of Napoleon. Produced in the Berry region, the cheese comes in a truncated pyramid shape. It has a smooth, creamy rich texture and mild flavor. If you can't find it, ask for Sainte-Maure, Tradition Jacquin or Tradition du Berry.

Clacbitou: A simple, rustic, raw goat's milk cheese, Clacbitou has a craggy appearance and a creamy, balanced goaty flavor. If you can't find it, ask for Ripened Crottin.

Brie: One of the best-known French cheeses, Brie is sometimes called the queen of cheeses. This cow's milk cheese has a pale, straw-colored interior and a thin rind of white mold. It's soft and creamy with full, mellow flavor and rich aroma.

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Langres: This washed-rind cow's milk cheese from Champagne has a firm and supple interior, and a rich, creamy and complex flavor. Unlike many strong, pungent washed-rind cheeses, Langres is milder and more delicate. It has a distinctive dimpled top and vibrant, orange rind. According to McCalman, "some people even pour champagne into the dimple and let it seep into the cheese." If you can't find it, ask for Époisses. Though stronger, is about the closest and is easy to find.

Tips for a Perfect Party

- Plan on four to six ounces of cheese per person.
- For peak freshness and flavor, shop for cheese close to your event
- Cheese is the star, so add accompanying foods that will be complementary. Thinly sliced apples or pears, nuts, figs, blackberries and dried apricots are all excellent supporting players. Also, try drizzling a little honey on pungent cheeses for a dash of sweetness.
- Chill sparkling wines overnight. Bring cheeses to room temperature before serving. It will take about 30 minutes to an hour, depending on size.
- Have palate cleansers such as mild crackers, bread and water for guests to nibble on or drink between selections.

Visit www.cheesesoffrance.com to get more ideas for seasonal Fromage Plates, everyday entertaining and unique pairing ideas with wine, liquor, coffee and more.

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