

Richmond Hill cafe&larder

CHEESE NOTES

Besace

(pron: bess-ess)

Perigord/Dordogne, France

In the south west corner of France there is a river that runs straight through the Loire Valley and into the High Pyrenees. This goat's cheese, Besace du Berger, comes from Dordogne, the area this river runs through. Formally known as Perigord and still referred to as Perigord by traditionalists and locals, this region is named after the Gauls that used to live in the region.

The word Besace translates literally to "wallet" or "purse" and was the name used to describe the little purse like sack that shepherds carried in old times. Traditionally the shape of the Besace cheese was created by placing the curd into either thin muslin or cheese cloth, gathering the ends together and hanging to enhance the distinctive shape. The muslin or cheese cloth would then be tied off, close to the curds, to ensure the curds held their shape. Now, thanks to new machinery and the modernising of cheese making techniques, the cheese is made using a much simpler mould which creates the same effect. Once the curds have drained each cheese is rolled in vegetable ash. Before we had refrigeration cheeses, especially fresh curds, would often be coated in wood fire ash to help preserve the cheese. These days it is done more for aesthetics and to enhance the flavour.

The Besace are then left to ripen over a four week period before they are ready for sale. During this time the cheese will slowly mature, developing a thin layer of white mould with specks of blue and grey marbled moulds throughout the rind.

To be ready for our shelves the Besace must be slightly squishy to touch which is an indication that the centre pate is firm and fudgy while the pate closer to the rind is soft and creamy. Its gooeyness is part of what makes this cheese so easy to eat! It is slightly tangy to taste, exhibiting that signature citric flavour that cheeses from the Loire Valley are so well known for. As it matures it becomes more floral and earthy. A truly interesting cheese!