

Richmond Hill cafe & larder

CHEESE NOTES

Holy Goat La Luna

Goat's milk, white mould
Sutton-Grange, Victoria

Holy Goat produce 4 different sized La Luna and it is interesting how the size of the cheese affects the taste and texture of each one. Baby La Luna are similar to crottin in shape, they are a little disc shape of approximately 50 grams. La Luna is one of the best goat cheeses we have seen in a long time. To let you know how talented these cheese makers are, they took out the gold medal for goat's cheeses, fresh and textured at the 2006 ASCA (Australian Specialty Cheese Association) show. This is a fantastic achievement for a small producer.

In 2005, the herd was only 44 animals and has been building up slowly. At the moment Carla and Ann-Marie are running a herd of 70 to 80 goats. The milking herd is currently 50. Their dedication to ensuring the goats are dried off properly, results in only the highest quality milk being used. 'Drying off' is the term used when you stop milking an animal, and let it's milk supply stop naturally. This care avoids producing the kind of milk many members describe as being too "goaty" or "strong". Carla and Ann-Marie are passionate about the breeding of their goats. The herd is mainly Swiss Saanen crossed with British Alpine. The girls have done a lot of work on the breeding of the goats, and now have an exceptional herd. If you wanted to start a herd of goats for milking, a member of the Holy Goat family would be the perfect foundation.

Carla and Ann-Marie have learned how to work with the Geotrichum mould. There exists about 17-20 different Geotrichum strains that range in colour, from snowy white to a more orange caramel hue. This particular Geotrichum is a golden colour and is not brought in as a culture, but has been cultivated from the natural airborne microflora of their farm and maturation rooms. This is also harder to do than you may believe. Geotrichum is the wrinkly creamy mould you see on many French goat cheeses and have a rich yeasty flavour without the sometimes-bitter hotness that you can get from French goat's cheese. Sublime is one way to describe Baby La Luna cheeses. The yeasty rind will gradually mature and appear to be melting off the cheese like it has a saggy baggy skin. A beautiful creamy texture it has great depth, nutty and creamy with the characteristic hint of citrus that is common to the milk of Holy Goat's herds. Because of the relatively large surface area to cheese ratio of this cheese it has a creamy soft, almost buttery texture on the palate with a rich creamy finish because of the Geotrichum mould. The citric finish is not nearly as prominent as the rest of the Holy Goat range.

Try them as part of a light lunch dish or entrée. Get the freshest baby vegetables possible; lightly poach them in a tarragon broth, drain, drizzle with Chapman Hill extra virgin olive oil and serve with sourdough bruschetta topped with a lightly grilled baby La Luna. To grill the La Luna, place onto a piece of baking paper and pop into an oven (180°C-200°C) for about 3-4 minutes. Using large flat field or Portobello mushrooms, drizzle with olive oil and fresh thyme, bake in a medium oven until cooked, pop a baby La Luna inside the mushroom cup, put back in the oven and bake until soft to touch and lightly browned.