

# Richmond Hill cafe & larder

## CHEESE NOTES

### Le Conquerant

(pron: ler konk-er-ont)

Cow's Milk

Normandie, France

When talking about camembert the first thing to understand is the difference between camembert and brie, a question we are asked very often here at RHC&L. When it comes to making cheese there are three very important factors, the milk, the terroir (land) and the know-how. It is believed camembert was first made in 1791 by Marie Harel, a French farmer from Normandy who had been advised to produce 'brie' to make more money from her dairy farm. Using the same recipe for brie, she created a cheese that was distinctively different in taste because the terroir was different, the cows had richer milk and she had a different touch to the male French farmers. Also, brie is generally made in larger 2-3kg wheels whereas camembert is traditionally made in smaller 250-400g units, needing only 3-5 weeks to mature compared to brie which generally requires 5-8 weeks.

In Australia, the name Will Studd is synonymous with quality products and passion for all things cheese. Will has gathered a network of European producers over the past 20 years, who are willing to take on the challenge of modifying their AOC versions to pass the necessarily exhaustive, and at times prohibitive, Australian quarantine laws. Enter 'le Conquerant', named after William the Conqueror, a camembert designed to taste as close to an unpasteurised camembert as possible.

It is said that when Napoleon first encountered this cheese in Normandy, he kissed the waitress who served it to him. Such is the power of Camembert. During WWI camembert was distributed to the French troops and fast became a household name. Just when a camembert is ready to eat is open to much debate. Locals like it young with a thin, chalky rind. But most of us have learnt to prefer it when the interior has softened to a moist sticky texture and the outer rind is a mix of white mould lightly flecked with patches of orange. Don't be surprised by the unmistakable smell!

Described as "les Pieds de Dieu" or "the Feet of God", a mature camembert has aromas similar to wet hay, and cooked cauliflower. The curd of real camembert ripens to become soft and unctuous – a cut cheese will bulge forth over time but will never run like fully ripened brie. The white, fluffy rind becomes mottled with orange and may develop a slight ammonia smell when ripe, contributing to the pungent, vegetal characteristic flavour which makes this one of our most requested cheeses. Le Conquerant has aromas similar to wet hay, truffle and tastes like cooked cauliflower and garlic.