

Richmond Hill cafe & larder

CHEESE NOTES

Pyengana

Huon valley, Tasmania

Pyengana is the aboriginal word for the meeting of rivers and Jon Healey is one of the few cheese makers in Australia making cloth-bound cheddar. With a history of cheese making over four generations, Jon still follows the method established by his great-grandfather at the turn of the century. The farm's herd of 180 Friesian cows (up to 200 in peak season) graze in the lush valley surrounding the George river in north eastern Tasmania. They are milked throughout the year, but the herd is split into summer and winter milkers. The peak period is during spring and autumn, when the volume of milk and complex balance of flavours are at its best. The cheese is all made in a small 1400 litre vat heated by a wood fired boiler. After adding starter and traditional calf rennet Jon uses a special technique of stirring the cut curd gently in the warm whey to ensure even acid development and its characteristic fine texture. After draining and hand-tearing, the salted curds are hooped into cloth bags and larger cheeses pressed overnight in the dairy's nineteenth century mechanical bed press. They are then transferred to the humid maturing room behind the shop. The larger wheels need over fifteen months maturation to ensure optimum flavour and the right humid conditions so that the cheese matures fully. The flavour is buttery and hay-like when young and more pronounced when aged, with honey, hay and summer grass on the nose.