



Perfect Pairings for a Wisconsin Specialty Cheese Course

With the reemergence of the traditional European cheese course on the American dining scene, the cheese course has proven it holds an important place on the menu – as an appetizer, bar offering or dessert alternative. Oftentimes, the key to a successful cheese course is all in the pairings from specialty accompaniments to perfectly paired beverages.

Cheese Course Essentials

In its simplest form, the cheese course is a grouping of three to five specialty cheeses presented on a tray or plate. In this type of presentation, the cheese takes center-stage, with its flavor and texture foremost. Encourage customers to select quality cheeses, with a unique flavor and story or history. Wisconsin cheese-makers offer a variety of small-batch, farmstead, cave-aged and washed-rind varieties that make excellent choices for a cheese course.

Adding Accompaniments

Cheese course accompaniments should enhance the overall look and taste of a cheese plate. Successful pairings improve the flavor and texture of both the cheese and the accompaniment.

Use these simple guidelines for cheese and accompaniment pairings:

- Pair similar flavored cheeses and foods such as strong cheeses with assertive foods, subtle cheeses with mild foods.
- Contrast cheese and pairing textures; serve smooth, soft Brie with crisp crackers or chewy Medjool dates with an aged Gruyère.

- Be willing to experiment and take chances – there are no absolute right or wrong decisions when it comes to cheese pairings.

Encourage your customers to try more exotic accompaniments to add interest to the cheese plate. For example, pair soft-rind cheeses such as Wisconsin Brie with pickled white asparagus, or hard cheeses, such as a Wisconsin Parmesan, with spiced pumpkin butter.

Beverage Pairing Basics

Beverage pairings for cheese should not be limited to wine. In fact, beer, port, cordials, cocktails and other non-alcoholic bar offerings also enhance and complement cheese.

Keep beverage and cheese pairings simple with a few key guidelines:

- White wines, such as Riesling, are less acidic and fruitier, making them easier to pair with cheese. Serve red wines, such as Pinot Noir, with more full-flavored cheeses.
- Pair strong, salty cheeses, such as a Wisconsin Blue, with dessert wines or fortified wines.
- Pair lighter cheeses with a lighter beer and strongly flavored beer with an assertive cheese.
- Fruity drinks and juice are excellent served with mild or medium cheese.

*The Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board offers a new pairing guide, "**Heightened Taste.**" To obtain a free copy of the guide or to access the Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board's recipe database and foodservice marketing tools, please visit www.foodservice.WisDairy.com.*

