



Harmony Valley Farm

Cheese Plate Newsletter

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This week's cheese delivery is for **Full Cheese Share** members only. Make sure your name is listed on the Customer Checklist for a cheese share before you take a cheese bag. Thanks!

CHEESE SELECTIONS OF THE WEEK

Cedar Grove Monterey Jack: This is a simple, creamy, yet slightly tangy cheese that can be used in a variety of ways. I enjoy this cheese as an accompaniment to fresh fruit for a snack, but it is also a really good cheese for melting. (Pasteurized)

Pastureland Dairy's Millville: It is a cheddar, but very different from the "usual cheddar." Millville is a cloth-bound cheddar made in a traditional English farmhouse style. This cheese is aged for a minimum of a year before it's released, and only gets better with age. During the aging process the cheese loses some of its moisture and concentrates and develops its flavors. You'll find this cheese to have a rich, tangy, buttery, creamy flavor. It will hold its own with other rich ingredients such as cream, roasted meats, mushrooms, etc. (Pasteurized)

Butler Farms Feta in Oil: This is a member favorite, so we made sure to bring it back for you again this year. Janet takes her delicious feta and seasons it with herbs, adds Driftless Sunflower Oil to it and you get a little taste of heaven. Toss some of the feta and oil with salad greens, add a splash of vinegar, and you just made an impromptu salad dressing! (Pasteurized)

Feta by Chef Brigitte

Feta is one of the world's oldest cheeses. It is most commonly associated with Greece and rightly so! Feta has been made in Greece for hundreds of years and no Greek table is complete without a slice of feta.

Since the ancient days, the production of feta has spread across Europe and into the United States. In 2005, the European Union granted Greece Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) status for feta. This means other feta-style cheese produced anywhere else in Europe must be called by a different name. I would venture to guess that the European Union will soon press the US to discontinue using the name feta as well. Similar to Parmigiano-Reggiano (from Italy) or Stilton (from England), only Feta made in Greece will be able to be called the well-known name of 'feta'.

Feta is traditionally made with sheep's milk and sometimes a combination of sheep and goat milk. In most of the US, feta is made from pasteurized cow's milk or sometimes buffalo milk. (You can see why the European Union would want to enforce the PDO in the States). Feta is pure white, soft to semi-hard and has no skin. It is usually formed into cakes and stored in brine which gives it a tangy and salty flavor, ranging from mild to sharp. If you buy feta from other sources, sometimes the brine can make it taste of little else than salt. In this case, you can soak the cheese in cold water or milk for a few minutes to relieve the saltiness.

But you won't have to worry about that with the feta you receive in this cheese share! This feta is from Butler Farms, located in Whitehall, WI. It is the first licensed Grade A sheep dairy in the United States and also produces camembert, aged Tomme, fresh Brebis and ricotta. Outside of our cheese share, the only place you can purchase Butler Farms cheeses is at the Dane County Farm Market in Madison on Saturday mornings. Their stand is conveniently located right next to Harmony Valley's!

True to tradition, Butler Farms feta is made from sheep's milk and then packaged in oil and herbs. The consistency is softer than most feta which makes it easy to spread on sandwiches, mix into dressings and melt into pasta sauce. Janet Butler uses Driftless Organic's Sunflower Oil in this preparation, making it even more locally special.

Naturally, feta goes well with Greek and Mediterranean influenced foods such as cucumbers, tomatoes, olives and spinach. Some traditional favorites are spanakopita and as the crowning top to a Greek salad. Feta is also great in omelets, quiche and crumbled on pizza. Another classic combination is watermelon and feta. My Grandpa always sprinkles salt on his watermelon, a practice I could never understand. While I'm not about to salt my melon, I do love to eat it with feta! The saltiness of the cheese brings out more of the melon's sweetness.

Feta in oil is great spread on warm bread, or toss with veggies of your choice (kale, cucumbers, tomatoes, sweet potatoes, red onions, etc.) and a splash of vinegar or lemon juice and call it salad!

Whatever way you decide to eat your feta, it's hard to go wrong with such a great cheese!

Pastureland Millville and Chive Drop Biscuits

Yields 24 biscuits

2 cups whole wheat flour
2 cups pastry flour
2 tsp salt
1½ Tbsp baking powder
½ tsp baking soda
8 oz butter
14 oz milk or buttermilk
1 Tbsp honey
2 cups grated Millville cheddar
¼ cup chives, chopped

-Preheat oven to 425°F.
-Combine all dry ingredients in a large bowl and in another bowl combine milk, cheddar and chives.
-Using a pastry cutter or robot coupe cut in butter until it is the size of peas.
-Add in milk, cheddar and chives and stir until thoroughly combined.
-Using a large tablespoon, scoop batter onto a baking pan and bake for 15-20 minutes.

Grilled Eggplant and Tomato Salad

1 medium eggplant
2 Tbsp olive oil
2 cups tomato, diced
4 oz Butler Farms feta in oil
1 Tbsp mint, chopped
1 Tbsp basil, chopped
2 tsp lemon zest
8 oz arugula
Balsamic vinegar or lemon juice
¼ cup toasted pine nuts, chopped almonds, or pumpkin seeds

-Heat your grill to about 400°F.
-Slice the eggplant in ½ slices and drizzle with olive oil.
-Grill the eggplant for 1-2 minutes on each side.
-Allow the eggplant to cool slightly and dice. Mix with the diced tomato and herbs and then carefully fold in the feta.
-Drizzle some balsamic vinegar or lemon juice and olive oil over the greens and spread the eggplant and tomato salad on top.
-Serve at room temperature or slightly chilled. Top with toasted almonds, pumpkin seeds or pine nuts.

Fruit Shares Still Available!

Cheese & Fruit go great together!

Contact Terri for start dates & prices

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In the Cheese Drawer....

....life goes on. Cheese is a living food and continues to undergo changes with time. **Knowing how to store cheese properly will ensure you enjoy your cheese instead of having to discard it.**

-**Fresh cheeses**, such as Brebis, feta, and ricotta should be stored in a closed container such as the tub they come in. They usually are best eaten within 7 days.

-**Semi-hard and hard cheeses** such as cheddar, Monterey jack, and Colby should be wrapped in parchment paper, waxed paper, or a paper towel once their original sealed package is opened. You can store the wrapped cheese in a plastic bag with a few holes punched in it to allow air flow.

-More **pungent cheeses** such as blue cheese should be wrapped in paper and put in a sealed container so the aroma doesn't dominate your refrigerator.

If you notice mold on either semi-hard or hard cheese, you can simply trim it off with a knife. Take care to wipe the blade of your knife clean after each cut so you don't spread the mold to the rest of the cheese. If a cheese seems/smells questionable, discard it. In general, mold on cheese is just a result of the natural cheese aging process and does not render the cheese inedible. The exception is with soft, fresh cheeses. If you see mold growing on a fresh, soft cheese, it is a good idea to discard the cheese. These cheeses have higher moisture content and are more perishable.

If you have more cheese on hand than you think you will eat, you can freeze it. Freezing cheese will make it more crumbly when thawed, but it will still be usable. Crumbly cheese can be used to garnish soups, top off tacos, or used in cooking....and you won't have to clean the cheese grater!