



The Cheese Course

Whether you're hosting a cocktail party or a dinner party, serve the perfectly composed cheeseboard by sticking with these essentials

**1. THE ANCHOR**

» Everyone loves Parmigiano-Reggiano, from the cognoscenti to your in-laws. Get a big hunk and break it into chunks with the twist of a knife. Consider it your staple: the golden sun around which every other cheese orbits. *Alternatives? There are none.*

2. SOFT AND SMOOTH

» Time to move beyond Brie. Try this grassy Petit-Pont-l'Evêque or a Pavé d'Affinois. Either way, make sure it's ripe. And be sure to serve it at room temperature—as all cheeses should be served. *Other choices: Saint-Marcellin, Saint-Félicien, and Le Fougerus.*

6. ACCOUTREMENTS

» You need something to cut the richness of cheese. Quince paste is a good option, as are grapes and fruit-studded bread, cut into slices and toasted.—**HOWIE KAHN**

5. FUNKY

» Serve something that smells. Epoisses, if you can find it, is king. This brandy-washed French cheese, when ripe, is so pungent, you can smell it from across the room. *Other delicious stink bombs: Livarot, Alsatian Munster, Langres.*

3. GOAT

» At the very least, you should have a cow's-milk and a goat's-milk cheese on your board. This Pouligny-Saint-Pierre is from France's Loire River Valley—an excellent goat-cheese-producing region. *Two more from France: Bode de Gâtine and Valençay. And one from California: Cypress Grove's Pee Wee Pyramid.*

4. HARD

» Serve a prized British Cheddar like Keen's or Montgomery's and consider the myriad ways in which Cheddar's good name has been besmirched by orange dye and vacuum-packing. *If you're not down with Cheddar, pick up Beaufort (from France), Mahón (from Spain), or Ossau-Iraty, a French sheep's-milk mountain cheese.*

* Buy and learn about cheese at Zingermans.com, Fromages.com, Cypressgrovechevre.com, and Murrayscheese.com.