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How to Make the Perfect Cheese Board by Albertina Roca

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You have guests coming to dinner, and you think, what is easier than a delicious cheese plate for an appetizer? After all, everybody loves cheese! Reality strikes when you realize just how many cheese there are to choose from! How to pick?These kinds of gourmet dilemmas are enough to keep a foodie away, so read on and we'll help you figure out how to pick cheeses for your cheese board that are bound to delight.

You want to have perhaps 4 to 5 cheeses, and you want them to be different, or else your cheese board will be boring. The trick to putting together a cheese board is to balance some key elements like flavor, texture and color. Milk type is the most obvious factor that changes the flavor of a cheese, but other things like age and added ingredients also come into play. Some basics to keep in mind are:

MILK TYPE: cow's milk cheeses are typically the mildest of all cheese. Goat and sheep's milk cheeses have a very characteristic flavor and aroma, which some people love and others not so much. You typically don't want to have more than one goat or sheep's milk cheese in your board, unless you know the palates of your guests very well. You can also experiment with a mixed milk cheese, which combines two or more milks.

AGE: A young cheese, one that's served about 2-3 weeks after production is typically much subtle in flavor than one that's been aged. A young cheese is usually a soft cheese, so that's another useful tip to keep in mind. Older cheese is crumblier and harder, like Parmigiano.

TEXTURE& COLOR: This varies dramatically, and you'll find that most people-pleasing cheeses are those that fall into the category of soft cheese and white cheese, likeBrie or triple cream cheese like Delice de Bourgone. Something fun to do is picking cheeses with a color palette that suits you. While some people might like an all-white cheeseboard, others might enjoy having a colorful one, with a fun orange cheese like Mimolette, or a striking black cheese likeash-topped Coeur de Berry.

COUNTRY: Indisputably, the country most famous for cheese is France. You could make up an almost limitless combination of cheese boards just with French cheeses! And we encourage you to do so! You'll find a wide array of French cheeses that cover all the categories we've talked about. However, it would be criminal to ignore the many other wonderful cheese selections from countries around the world. Create a fun, country-themed arrangement of cheeses, like a â€œCheese from Spainâ€• cheese board; or mix and match for an inventive â€œinternationalâ€• cheese board. An example? Pair a soft white Brie from France with a wine-soaked red Murcia Al Vino goat cheese from Spain, a fruity Taleggio from Italy, and a delicious crowd-favorite aged Cheddar from England.

Just remember, these aren't hard rules, just guidelines! The important thing is to have fun and pick cheeses you like. A cheeseboard also gives you the perfect opportunity to try a new cheese, since you have three or four staples in case it's a miss. Have fun, pick your favorite wine, and nibble away!

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Albertina Roca - About Author:
With years of experience under her belt writing about a cheese and other a gourmet foods, the author is especially a fan of French cheeses and soft cheeses like Brie (her favorite). For more information please visit http://www.gourmetfoodstore.com

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