

Richmond Hill cafe & larder

CHEESE NOTES

Carles Roquefort

Sheep's milk blue

Roquefort-sur-Soulzon, Auvergne, France

Legend has it that a young shepherd from Roman times dropped part of his meal of bread and sheep's milk curd in the Combalou cave. He returned weeks later to find it covered in a white paste of cheese with blue mould. He ate it, loved it and so Roquefort was born.

Carles is one of the few remaining family producers of Roquefort. Cheese is hand made the old fashioned way using fresh raw ewes milk which is still delivered to the dairy in churns rather than tankers. Jacques and his daughter Delphine take great pride in the secret strains of roqueforti mould sprinkled into the curds before the cheese is matured in the family caves on thick slabs of oak shelving that date back more than a century. Soft, creamy and quite crumbly, the production of this cheese represents less than 1% of all Roquefort, and demand is so strong that new customers must join a queue.

Roquefort is still known as 'the king of cheese', with its deliciously complex taste profile. The exterior of the cheese should appear white with a shiny wetness. The p \hat{a} te of the Carles is both firm and crumbly at the same time. It is rich, with a smooth mouth feel that coats your mouth with a dense creaminess, without the fattiness. Carles Roquefort has a distinctive bouquet, which is both delicate, yet strong. It is probably one of the best-balanced Roquefort's on the market. On the palate, there is a clean earthiness to it, but without the damp musty smell. The blue is a distinctive savoury blue, not an overly sweet or acidic blue.

For a cheese to be called Roquefort AOC, it has to fulfil the following legislated rules:

- Milk may not be used within 20 days of lambing
- Renneting must take place within 48 hours
- Cultures of *Penicillium Roqueforti* used to produce the cheese must be produced in France from the traditional sources of the mould, the natural caves in particular communes
- Dry salt must be used for the salting process
- Producers must keep a register listing quantities of milk delivered, along with the weight and number of cheeses manufactured every day for French officials to access at any time to ensure AOC standards are being met
- The whole process of production of Roquefort must occur in the commune of Roquefort-sur-Soulzon - from the moment it enter the caves of Mont Combalou (or Cambalou), to its ageing and packing, through to the storage and sale.