

Richmond Hill cafe & larder

CHEESE NOTES

Coolea *

(koo-LAY)

Cow's milk, hard cooked curd

Macroom, West Cork, Ireland

Made in a similar size to traditional Dutch Gouda, these wheels are approximately 7 kilograms. As is traditional with most Dutch cheese, it has a breathable wax coating. How did a Dutch style cheese end up being made in the middle of Ireland? Over 20 years ago a Dutch couple, Helene & Dick Willems, brought a farm in Macroom in a remote part of County Cork (County Cork is situated in the South-West of Ireland). In the Netherlands, Helene had run a discothèque and several pubs and no longer wanted to be involved in the restaurant and hospitality industry. She thought it was time to enjoy the peace and quiet of their remote property. The pastures of the farm were rich and lush so the couple purchased a herd and bred enough animals to eventually start making cheese. Now their son Dickie has taken over the mantle of cheese maker and is continuing the fine tradition.

Coolea was named after a nearby village and is based on a Boeren kaas Gouda or Gouda from the north of The Netherlands called Saenkanter (traditionally 3-4 years old and in black wax).

Coolea is a light to deep yellow straw colour depending on age and has a smooth, slightly creamy texture. It is not as candy sweet as Dutch Gouda can be. For cheese to age for this long you need to expel as much moisture as possible from the cheese. This happens by cutting the curd up into tiny pieces, then cooking the curd (thus the term cooked curd), then pressing the curd in its mould under high pressure. This pressing of the curd for several hours further expels the whey and creates the uniform smooth texture of the paste. It has a nutty piquant flavour with hints of caramel and butterscotch, which reflects the rich herbage of the lush pastures in Cork. There then follows saltiness with a touch of acidity. The intense flavours means only a little is needed to experience the richness of this cheese. This cheese makes an excellent table cheese but can also be used in cooking.