

Richmond Hill cafe & larder

CHEESE NOTES

Manchego

La Mancha, Spain

La Mancha is a wild place with vast rolling plains sometimes more than six hundred metres above sea level. Ruggedly beautiful, it is often inhospitable, being hot, dry and windy in summer and freezing in winter. It is home to many thick-fleeced Manchega sheep and rugged up weather-beaten shepherds whom have been tending to these herds for centuries. Genuine Manchego is made here all year round and is the most widely recognised cheese produced in Spain. True Manchego is made from whole ewe's milk and unfortunately there are many inferior copies made throughout Spain. In a roundabout way, Australia is responsible for the growth of the cheese industry in La Mancha - the export of cheese became the mainstay of this region only after Australia replaced Spain as the world's leading wool exporter some 150 years ago. Often used as part of a tapas meal, Manchego is eaten with quince paste and robust Spanish wine or grated in cooking, although the younger cheeses need little more than crusty bread and a gentle red or dry Spanish sherry. The aged cheeses (more than 12 months old) have a characteristic briny, slightly sweet nuttiness and a truly savoury sheep's milk flavour.