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## The Cheeses to Beat

November 9, 2022



Goumino board: (l to r) Ur-Eiche, Emmentaler AOP, Bleu de Combreumont, Le Gruyère AOP

**The wins** just keep coming for Gourmino. This Swiss marketing co-op has 13 cheesemaker members who seem to have a lock on the top prize at major international competitions. Last week, a Gourmino Gruyère prevailed at the World Cheese Awards in Wales, besting 4,433 entries. Earlier this year, a Gourmino Gruyère from cheesemaker Michael Spycher was named World Champion Cheese—for the third time. I can't overstate how remarkable that is.

What is going on in those Gourmino aging caves to produce so many superstar cheeses?

Gourmino doesn't make any cheese. Its members do, at their own small independent creameries. But the members jointly own aging caves where their young wheels are matured by experts.

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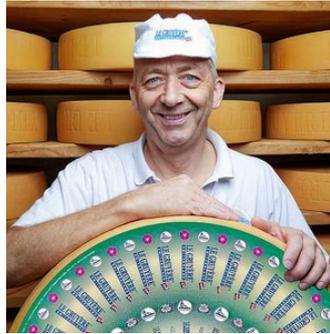
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You can read more about Gourmino in [this Planet Cheese post](#). All Gourmino cheeses are made with raw milk. Ten of the members make Emmentaler AOP, three of them make Le Gruyère AOP and almost all of them make another cheese or two that is unique to them, like Ur-Eiche and Bleu de Combremont (pictured above).

Every wheel of Gruyère has to age at the creamery where it was made for a minimum of four months to qualify for AOP status. After that, if it's deemed worthy of further aging, Gruyère from a Gourmino producer goes to the Gourmino caves dug into a mountain in the Bernese Alps. The affinage experts take it from there, brushing, turning and pampering the wheel until they determine that the quality is peaking. That's the hard part and the risky part, says Joe Salonia, Gourmino's U.S. sales rep. A Gruyère Surchoix (12 to 15 months old) fetches more than a younger wheel, and a Gruyère Réserve (15 to 20 months) is worth more yet. But not every wheel can go the distance, and guessing wrong is costly.



Champion cheesemaker: Urs Leuenberger

"We have to understand that arc of taste," says Salonia. "The affineurs know if a wheel is getting better or if it's declining." In this video from the Gourmino cellar, you can watch an affineur put his finely honed sensory skills to work:

Die Arbeits eines Affineurs



Cheesemaker [Urs Leuenberger](#) produced the Gruyère Surchoix that won this year's World Cheese Awards. All his milk comes from farms less than a kilometer away and he makes only five or six wheels of Gruyère each day. Currently only two shops in the U.S. have Leuenberger's Gruyère ([The Cheese Shop of Des Moines](#) and [Darien Cheese & Fine Foods](#)) although they are possibly sold out by now.

I haven't tasted Leuenberger's Gruyère but I have tasted Spycher's (pictured above) multiple times. It is exceptionally silky and creamy, with an aroma of warm cream and toasted walnuts. The [2021 Gustave Lorentz Pinot Gris Réserve](#) made a lovely companion.



**Welcome** to my world: a fragrant, fascinating universe devoted to great cheese. In this and future *Planet Cheese* posts, you'll find profiles of the world's best cheeses plus insights into everything cheese: shops, recipes, interviews, pairing discoveries, classes, videos, travel. If you haven't already done so, [sign up here](#) - it's complimentary - and join me in learning something new about cheese every week.

## Upcoming Classes & Events

### World Cheese Tour

**All 2022 World Cheese Tour classes are sold out. Please watch Planet Cheese for details of the 2023 World Cheese Tour, coming soon.**

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“It’s going to take some time but there will be wheels trickling in,” says Salonia of Leuenberger’s Gruyère. In the meantime, look for his **Jùscht**, a younger mountain cheese which has more U.S. distribution.

Also keep your eyes out for other Gourmino cheeses. **Ur-Eiche** is splendid, with a potent roasted-onion fragrance and intense, beefy flavor. I also adore **Hornbacher**, **Schallenberger** and **Brebidoux**. Bleu de Combremont was too pungent for me when I tried it recently, but it might have been overly mature. It won a Super Gold at the recent World Cheese Awards, a distinction afforded to roughly the top 2 percent. The only U.S. cheeses to achieve Super Gold status were **Greensward**, **Hudson Flower** and St. Malachi Reserve from the **Farm at Doe Run**.

Look here for retailers that tend to carry Gourmino cheeses.

In From: Switzerland, Milk: Cow Tags World Cheese Awards, Gourmino, Le Gruyère AOP, Gruyère, raw-milk cheese, Swiss cheese, Emmentaler, Michael Spycher, Urs Leuenberger

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### Comments (10)

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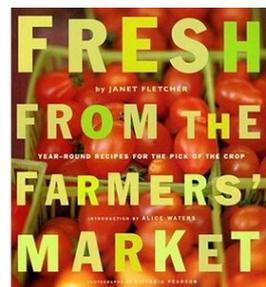
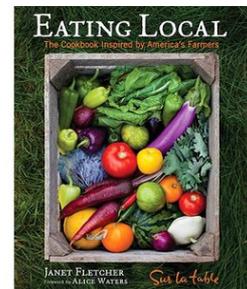
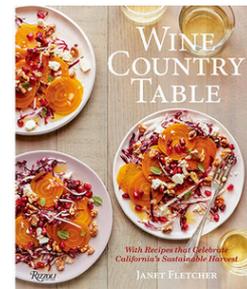
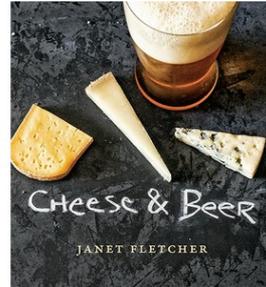
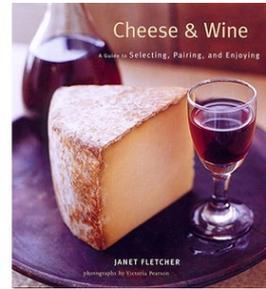
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**Janet T** 2 days ago · 0 Likes

Thank you for this article. Very informative. I love Gruyere! How many international cheese contests are there? Are they all annual? How do the World Cheese Awards and The World Champion Cheese competitions rank in importance among the international competitions?

**janet@janetfletcher.com** 2 days ago · 0 Likes

Those are difficult questions to answer, Janet, because it may depend on your perspective. In my view, the World Cheese Awards have a little more stature than World Championship Cheese, which is held in Wisconsin. My impression is that WCA draws more European entries, and more varied entries from more countries, and the WCC has more representation from Wisconsin and fewer European entries from a variety of countries. WCA is an annual competition; WCC is biannual. For American cheesemakers, the American Cheese Society competition, also annual, is very important.



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 **Fran Rondeau** 4 days ago · 0 Likes

Mon Dieu!

Now I desperately want to go to that one kilometer area of Switzerland just to taste these amazing Gourmino cheeses and meet all 13 of the producers in real time! Plain, with baguette, in a salad, or melted Emmentalers and Gruyères are supreme. In my opinion fondu and your recommended Pinot Gris Réserve would be the perfect marriage! The next time it rains I will be ready with extra of both on hand.

---

 **janet@janetfletcher.com** 4 days ago · 0 Likes

I know...I want to go meet all these wonderful cheesemakers, too. Especially the one female member of the co-op! Thanks for commenting, Fran. Nice to hear from you.

---

 **Susan** 5 days ago · 0 Likes

Hi Janet, maybe I misunderstood your comment or the list of winners when I read it, but I thought that Midnight Moon got SuperGold, or was it “just” gold?

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 **janet@janetfletcher.com** 5 days ago · 0 Likes

I'm not sure what Midnight Moon won but it's not technically an American cheese. it's made in the Netherlands. Marketed by Cypress Grove but not made by them.

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 **Susan** 5 days ago · 0 Likes

Oh wow, thank you for pointing that out. I thought that Cypress made it! I certainly do love it!

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 **janet@janetfletcher.com** 5 days ago

· 0 Likes

Rightly so!

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 **Denis Cottin** 5 days ago · 0 Likes

Félicitations à la production des excellents fromages de suisse en particulier au gruyère de la coopérative Gourmino. Une reconnaissance mérité !  
Congratulation to the Swiss Cheeses production. Particularly to the Gruyère AOC-AOP made by Gourmino.

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 **janet@janetfletcher.com** 5 days ago · 0 Likes

So grateful to Gourmino for bringing us these superb Swiss cheeses!



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