

SMALLER PRODUCTION CHEESES

LA TUR

- Milk** – Cow, sheep, and goat
- Origin** – Caseificio Dell’Alta Langa, Alta Langa, Piedmont, Italy
- Rind** – Natural, beginning to form bloom
- Paste** – Hedonistic velvety creamy mousse-like center, with just a hint of runny creaminess near the surface
- Ageing** – 15 days at the caseificio. Should be eaten fresh



FIGURE 3.13 La Tur

This was described by a local cheesemonger as the “sexiest cheese in the world.” In fact, she said that some of her customers (at the Cheese Plate in New Paltz, NY) will come by for a wheel if they’ve had a particularly bad day . . . and go home to eat the whole thing with a spoon. While cheese therapy is not normally recommended, it does provide an idea of how deeply satisfying La Tur can be. All three milks add to its broad balance of fresh flavors – each one adds some of its own character without being obvious. The most important thing to remember is to take this cheese out of the refrigerator at least a half hour before serving it. For the texture to be at its best, it should be closer to room temperature.

ROBIOLA

- Milk** – Cow, goat, or a blend of the two, sometimes with the addition of sheep’s milk
- Origin** – Mostly from Lombardia and Piemonte, some from the Langhe, Northern Italy
- Rind** – Usually natural, acquiring bloom or mold with age. Some are wrapped in leaves, either chestnut or Savoy cabbage.
- Paste** – Depending on age, the texture is almost always moist, with varying degrees of creaminess
- Ageing** – as little as 3 to 10 days, but the more complex versions are aged up to 3 months
- D.O.P.** – some members of the Robiola family have name protection



FIGURE 3.14 Robiola Bosina

The Robiola family is one of rich, luxurious cheeses from the north of Italy. The base milk is not a constant, but the general style is – whether young or aged for a few months,

these cheeses are rich, moist, and not terribly challenging to the palate or beverage accompaniment. Small differences abound as you move from producer to producer, so it's worth being observant as you're shopping for Robiola. Aging brings complexity, of course, but rarely does it lead to funkiness. One exception would be the versions with washed rinds that can resemble Taleggio, meaning stinky. Still, versions like Robiola Bosina (pictured) are more representative of the bunch. It is a blend of cow's and sheep's milk, with a gentle bloomed rind. With just enough character from the sheep's milk to keep it from being boring, this is a true pleasure to eat while not having to think too much. It comes from a town (Bosia) just south of Alba in Piemonte; try pairing it with an Arneis (white) wine from the region, or a sparkling Franciacorta Brut from neighboring Lombardia.



COULOMMIERS

- Milk** – Cow (pasteurized)
- Origin** – Île-de-France, France
- Rind** – Bloomy
- Paste** – Light to bright yellow, creamy, sometimes with a chalky center
- Aging** – 1 to 4 weeks

This is from the Seine-et-Marne Département in Île-de-France, the administrative region of France that includes Paris. Similar to Brie in several ways, it tends to be a bit smaller. The flavor is subtle, with a milky, nutty, earthy flavor and aroma. Its exterior should be white and velvety with mold. The main difference between this

and a Brie or Camembert is that this smaller cheese is relatively thick, and the ripeness doesn't always reach the center of the cheese by the time of purchase. With one to four weeks of aging, younger ones might still have a small band of chalkiness in the center. There is nothing wrong with this, in fact, it adds textural interest, and is an indication that the flavor will be particularly fresh.



RITA

- Milk** – Cow (pasteurized)
- Origin** – Sprout Creek Farm, Poughkeepsie, NY
- Rind** – Bloomy
- Paste** – Creamy, pale yellow
- Aging** – 3 to 6 weeks

If you like Brie, and would prefer to go local, you might want to look for Rita from Sprout Creek. The cheese is rich, creamy and buttery, with just enough of an earthiness and acidic tang at the end to keep it

from being boring. It is only available from October until March, and is one of only two bloomy cheeses made at the farm.

FOUGERUS

- Milk** – Cow (pasteurized)
- Origin** – Île-de-France, France
- Rind** – Bloomy, with a fern on top
- Paste** – Yellow-light gold, creamy
- Aging** – 4 weeks

Another brie-like cheese. It was originated by Robert Rouzaire, the producer of Pierre Robert. The fern on top is somewhat controversial. According to some, it was originally put there by Rouzaire to identify this Coulommiers-style cheese as one of his products. Some even say that he used it to hide defects in the original cheeses. There is also disagreement on both the edibility of the fern, as well as its effect on the cheese itself. Most say it is inedible and has no effect on the cheese. Technically, it is edible, and some reliable sources, such as Max McCalman, say that the fern “seems to tone down the soapiness” of this cheese.

Whatever you believe, it is a wonderful, creamy, earthy cheese that isn't too heavy on the salt. The original version was made with raw milk, but the version imported to the United States is made with pasteurized milk. Even so, it can easily surpass many so-called Brie and Camembert cheeses in quality.



FIGURE 3.17 Fougere

EUROPEAN ALPHABET SOUP

The capsule descriptions of the cheeses, in some cases, will have an entry that might look like “A.O.C. – 1959.” This indicates that the cheese received approval to be considered a product unique to a certain place, and is now protected by the French government. Essentially, this protection means that the name of the region can only be used for *that product*, and may not appear on the labels of any other. For instance, Champagne is a sparkling wine from the Champagne region in France, made under specific controls and from within a specific boundary. Sparkling wines from other regions in France may not (by law) use the term *Champagne* on their labels. Such wines are usually referred to as “Cremant de (region, e.g., Alsace)” and might even be made from the same grape varieties and in the exact same method as authentic Champagne.

This system protects the original producers of a particularly fine product from imitators who try to get in on the action by making a similar product in a different place. The systems, as you might imagine, are far from perfect – quality is not necessarily guaranteed, just provenance; and towns whose names appear in other A.O.C.s are not allowed to put the name of their own town on the label.

So why all the wine talk in a cheese book? Since 1990, A.O.C.s have been applied to more than wine. There are now cheeses, honey, even lentils and chickens with A.O.C. protection, and it therefore applies to some

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RAVIOLI WITH ZUCCHINI AND LEMON THYME

YIELD: 10 APPETIZER OR 6 MAIN COURSE PORTIONS

This is one of the loveliest, most delicate pasta dishes I have ever tasted. Its lightness and gentle, fragrant lemon scent make it a perfect first or second course in a meal where the main course is a white fish, such as bass or snapper. The dish comes from the Caterina de' Medici restaurant at The Culinary Institute of America, and should be attributed to chefs Dwayne LiPuma and Gianni Scap-pin. By the way, the 00 flour specified below refers to the Italian practice of labeling flour according to how finely milled it is. "00" or *doppio zero* is the finest and is usually the choice for both pastas and pizza dough. It is readily available in specialty stores and from baker's supply houses.

RAVIOLI STUFFING

Olive oil	1 Tbsp	15 mL
Finely chopped shallot	2 Tbsp	30 mL
Zucchini, seeded and cut into brunoise (skin on)	2 cups	480 mL
Leeks, white and pale green parts only, washed and cut into brunoise	3/4 cup	180 mL
Parsley chiffonade	1 Tbsp	15 mL
Chopped mint	2 Tbsp	30 mL
Chopped lemon thyme (may substitute lemon verbena)	1 1/2 tsp	7.5 mL
Fresh goat cheese log	8 oz	227 g
Ricotta impastata	8 oz	227 g
Grated Parmigiano-Reggiano or Grana Padano	1 cup	240 mL
Eggs, beaten	2	2
Kosher salt	as needed	as needed
Freshly ground black pepper	as needed	as needed

FRESH PASTA DOUGH

00 flour	13 oz	369 g
Semolina durum flour	3 oz	85 g
Large eggs	4	4
Olive oil	2 Tbsp	30 mL
Salt	1/2 oz	14 g
Warm water	as needed	as needed

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ASSEMBLY

Vegetable or chicken stock, homemade or low-sodium	2 cups	480 mL
Ravioli	60	60
Butter	4 oz	113 g
Small zucchini, split lengthwise, seeded, and cut into 1/4 in/6 mm crescents	1 lb	454 g
Grated Parmigiano-Reggiano or Grana Padano	1 cup	240 mL
Roughly chopped parsley	1/2 cup	120 mL
Salt	as needed	as needed
Ground black pepper	as needed	as needed

METHOD

1. For the stuffing: In a large sauté pan over low heat, add the oil and sweat the shallots until translucent, about 3 minutes. Add the zucchini and leeks and cook until just tender, about 3 more minutes. Remove from heat and stir in the herbs. Allow to cool to room temperature.
2. Combine the cheeses and the eggs in a large bowl. Gently mix the zucchini mixture into the 3 cheeses. Season the mixture with salt and pepper.
3. For the pasta dough: Add the flour to the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with a dough hook or a food processor with a dough blade. Mix the eggs, olive oil, salt, and water together and pour the mixture into the bowl. Start mixing on first speed or pulse in the food processor until combined. Mix the dough until it pulls away from the sides of the bowl and is smooth and elastic, about 5 minutes for the mixer or 2 to 3 minutes for the food processor. Remove the dough from the bowl and let it rest, covered in plastic wrap, for at least a half hour.
4. Roll the pasta dough into very thin (about #7 on a pasta machine) strips 5 in/13 cm wide. Cover the strips with a damp towel or plastic wrap until ready to stuff them. Do not lay the strips on top of each other unless they are well dusted with semolina flour.
5. Make the ravioli with one teaspoon of filling each. To make round ravioli, place the filling close enough to the bottom of the pasta strip that you can fold the top half over and cut with a 2-in/5-cm round cutter. Pick up each piece and gently squeeze the edges to seal them. For half-moon ravioli, the pasta strips can be narrower, still folded over and cut with a round cutter. Make sure to squeeze out any air bubbles while sealing them, otherwise the ravioli may burst while being boiled.
6. Bring 2 qt/1.92 L of water to a boil in a 3-qt/2.88-L saucepan. Add 1/4 cup salt and blanch the zucchini crescents, drain, and then shock in ice water. Drain and hold aside until needed.
7. Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Salt the water liberally and add the ravioli. Meanwhile, in a sauté pan, heat the vegetable stock over medium heat until steaming. Mount the butter into the stock and reduce to a sauce consistency, about 5 minutes. When the ravioli float to the top of the cooking water, after 4 to 5 minutes, drain with a colander or large strainer, reserving about 1 cup of the cooking water to thin the sauce with, if necessary. Add the blanched zucchini and ravioli to the sauté pan that the sauce is in. Stir the grated cheese and parsley into the sauce and adjust seasoning with salt and pepper if necessary.
8. Place ravioli into the serving bowl, and spoon the sauce over the ravioli.