



Wine and Cheese from Hungary

U N G A R N

logocsere



Bevezetés

Cheese culture, similarly to wine culture is an integral part of gastronomic traditions. Cheese and wine, these two wonderful products of man have a lot in common, as the best ones of both are carefully matured and nurtured before they reach their full splendour.

Can you think of greater pleasure than tasting a well-matured cheese with a glass of good wine and a slice of healthy bread that go with it?

The well-matured cheese and the wine carefully chosen to match it can even get into a love relationship with each other. And where such a liaison occurs wedding will not be a rare event. That is why we speak of the marriage of cheese and wine as an ideal marriage. Where there is marriage there should also be a bed. An ideal bed for the wine is the cheese itself.

Although wine and cheese usually have a good time together, different sorts of wine will make a difference to the appreciation of the cheese.

There are no absolute rules in this field either. On the other hand, there are dogmas that are ill conceived in the mind of the average man-in-the-street. Although everything is basically decided by the individual taste, those who are more experienced in gastronomic culture are aware of the main tendencies, the main principles, directions of pairing cheese and wine, and these are more often based on long experience. So there is a possibility of achieving a great harmony between various cheeses and wines. It is worthwhile playing with couplings of cheese and wine at home when you are with your family or with friends. Look for a worthy partner of your favourite cheeses or just the opposite; find ideal cheese counterparts for your favourite wines. In all this, of course, a good sensation of taste and good taste play a big role.

Contrary to general belief, it is not only and not even primarily the red wines that can be ideally paired with cheeses. The main reason for this is that the tannin in red wines, especially in the more full-bodied ones, overpowers the noble flavours of most cheeses, sometimes brutally wrestling it to the ground, "defeating" it, or in lesser cases it just turns it back on the cheese. Therefore when coupling wine with cheese you should avoid the red wines held in especially high esteem in Hungary, the "big guns", tannin bombers, intensive barrique wines. You should rather enjoy them on their own or you could find a suitable food-partner for them like wild game. Cheeses do not require very old, very ripe museum wines either.

As a basic rule you can state that harmony can only be created if there is a good balance between cheese and wine. Most Hungarian cheeses are noted for being over-matured. Most of them are fresh cheeses, or matured for a short time, which prefer fresh, light white wines. Anyone can try a counter-proof: take any fresh cream cheese and taste it after a big gulp of barrique-matured, full-bodied Cabernet; you will experience a flavour of the cheese which practically disappears in the rich tannin of the wine. Harmony can only be brought about, it could only be perfect when, as a result of marrying the cheese with the wine, both of them become something more together than they were separately, both highlighting something splendid in the other!

The more full-bodied and more marked the flavours of the cheese are, the more you can venture towards more flavoured, more full-bodied, more mature white wines until you arrive at a point where you must change to red wine. It must be noted that in the case of several cheese types the matching with wine may have several candidates, that is the given cheese may be coupled with suitable white and red wines as well. The difference is only that both types of wine will bring out different flavours in the cheese. Some prefer one or the other depending on individual taste. Some guidance will be given in the detailed descriptions.

Some cheeses may be matched with a red wine more, in these cases you should choose from among the fruity wines, in which it is not the tannin playing the main role, but the fruity flavours. These are the wines, which, using international comparison, are closest to the flavour world of the famously fruity Beaujolais. Such are the Hungarian "primeur" wines mainly made from Kékoportó, Kékfrankos, Blauburger and their blending, as well as their slightly 'aged' versions.

If you still need a wine with more tannin, the tannin should be more rounded, velvety, fine structured and sufficiently matured. Choose from varieties, and mainly from producers, that are exactly like that. For example, Kékoportó, the beautifully made Zweigelt or Merlot are well suited for this role, supposing, they are from a good producer. What should be mentioned separately and underlined is the excellent Burgundy variety, which is spreading in Hungary, the Pinot Noir. One of the characteristics of the variety is that its splendour does not come from its enormous tannins but rather from its rich fruity elegance, its lightness, and its finesse. Let us see the possible matching of cheese and wine by cheese families:

Light fresh cheeses – which are not matured – can marry best with light, fresh, dry white wines with a good acid structure, not high in alcohol, as well as with Rosé wines.

To accompany semi-hard cheeses, including ewe's milk cheeses, it is advisable to choose white wines in relation to their maturity ranging from medium-bodied to great full-bodied wines. But according to your taste it might be possible to match these cheeses with lighter red wines. You should give preference to the rounded varieties, which are not too rich in tannin and are velvety like the wines made from Pinot Noir, Merlot, Kadarka or Kékoportó grapes.

Soft cheeses matured with a "bloom" (camembert, brie and similar sorts) prefer lighter, more fruity red wines with not too much tannin but if a cheese is less matured you should choose Rosés or Schiller.

Filmy skinned soft cheeses, whose flavours are stronger and more pungent, are best with full-bodied, matured great white wines or with round red wines with well-matured tannin. Goat's milk cheeses marry best with vivid, piquante white wines with a good acidity and among them most of all Sauvignon Blanc or a good Rosé. If the goat's milk cheese is matured fully, which is rare in Hungary, a more full-bodied white wine, or possibly a light red wine, could accompany it.

In case of blue-veined cheeses, of the Roquefort type, several successful matchings are possible. Great, very mature, rounded red wines, or the not too sweet wines with good acidity of late-harvested, naturally sweet wines, e.g. Tokaj Szamorodni sweet, Aszú with lower „puttony” numbers, Aszú essence and similar wines can produce a splendid harmony. The good branded very dry (brut) champagnes are also good as a companion to most matured cheeses.

To match processed cheeses you can choose almost any wine ranging from medium-bodied white wines through Rosé and Schiller to light red wines.

Smoked cheeses form a separate category in Hungary. There are not so many varieties of smoked cheeses in the world as on the Hungarian market. The decisive factor here is the degree of smoking, and this is what usually overshadows all the other flavours of the cheese.

Here you can let your barrique wines interfere, smoke in the cheese and smoke in the wine can go well with each other, but less smoked cheeses are on better terms with great white wines.

When we speak about wines accompanying cheeses, even if we do not stress it, we obviously mean exclusively dry wines. If exceptionally, we recommend a sweet wine, it is always noted. We can cool the red wine accompanying the cheese more than we would otherwise do, try wines at the temperature of 13 C° to give the best match.

One more piece of advice! It is not enough to choose a wine by the name of the wine-growing region or the grape variety. You should always think of the producer, it is as important as the other factors. The same variety of wine from the same region may show enormous quality differences. You should keep in mind that we recommend perfect wines from among the best products of the best producers to match perfect cheeses. Harmony between wine and cheese may only be achieved if both the cheese and the wine are perfect examples of their kind. Because a perfect synthesis may only be brought about from perfect ingredients.

Wine and Cheese from Hungary

Fresh cheese, the childhood of cheese



Several of our Hungarian cheeses belong to this large family. The common features of these cheeses are fresh lightness, their texture is often curd-like or creamy. They are not matured so they can be consumed immediately. In return, spices are often added to them on the outside and inside, e.g. after kneading the cheese is dipped in aromatic herbs or the cheese pasta is directly flavoured with aromatic herbs or often with garlic, caraway seed, nut. Those that can be used as a spread are usually sold in jars, like the popular Tihany cheese family.

This group includes also a salty Feta type cheese, which is well known all over the Balkans and has been made in Hungary for a long time under the name of cream white cheese. It is originally stored in a salty solution or in spicy oil in small bottles. The spicier one is made of ewe's milk but it can also be made of cow's milk or from the mixture of the two. They are sold under various names with different seasonings.

Fresh cheeses may be used in many ways. Cream cheeses may be spread on light white or half-brown bread, baguette or toast or similarly on salty crackers, crispy bread pies, sliced fresh vegetables. Their flavours may be emphasised by branches of aromatic herbs. These cheeses may be used for cold plates in infinite ways.

The ones with a harder texture that can be cut, together with the Feta type ones, can be sliced as you like, they are also good as salad ingredients.

Matching wines:

The character of fresh cheeses can be best matched with wines that have similar characteristics, that is light, fresh white wines. Select these wines from the latest one or two vintages if possible. It is important that they should not have too high alcohol content, should not be too much perfumed, having lot of aromas but they should have "happy", vivid acids.

Such varieties are produced mainly in the northern regions of Hungary. A lot of suitable wines may be found such as Olaszrizling, Leányka and Zenit from the vineyards in the regions of Mátraalja and Eger, Riesling and Sauvignon from the Ászár-Neszmély wine-growing region and Pannonhalma, Veltelini and Királyleányka from the vicinity of Sopron as well as the light dry white wines produced in the Southern Balaton region. Of course, a good wine from the Alföld (Great Plain) produced by a reputable producer can also be a good companion to fresh cheeses.

The other possible variety may be among the Rosé wines. Good, dry Rosés (even if they tend to be a bit like Schiller wines) the best examples of which come from outstanding wine-growers of Szekszárd but the lead producers of Villány are also in the vanguard of Rosé production. Some superb Rosés can be found in Mátraalja and Eger. Most of these are produced from Kékfrankos which have suitable acids for Rosés or in case of blending the main component is Kékfrankos, which is blended with Kékoportó, Kadarka, sometimes Merlot or rarely Pinot Noir or Cabernet. Such wines with their vivid, fresh acids go perfectly well with fresh cheeses, highlighting their lightness, slenderness.

Wine and Cheese from Hungary

Gomolya cheeses



Within the family of fresh cheeses a separate chapter should be devoted to the Gomolya cheeses which are of importance in traditional diets. Written records of these cheeses date back as early as the 16th century. Originally shepherds and their wives used to make these spectacular loaf-shaped fresh cheeses with small holes from raw ewe's milk, which were matured only for a couple of days. On the wet surface of the cheese you can usually see the pattern of the flax cloth through which the cheese was drained.

Most characteristically it was made on the Alföld. It was and is still made, e.g. in Transylvania with ancient techniques by mountain shepherds. The Gomolya smells and tastes fresh of lactic acid and it is pleasantly salty.

From the 19th century its cow's milk versions has also spread. It may also be made, even if rarely, from goat's milk. These cheeses have become known in the past decades as the Palóc Gomolya, Swabian Gomolya, Kunság Gomolya. From the 90s several cheese companies have produced Gomolya cheeses. Some of them produce versions flavoured with spices (dill, chive, garlic, etc.).

Today's versions do not always follow the loaf shape, they may have a traditional cylindrical shape, in one piece or sliced (see the picture) from cow's milk, goat's milk and in a slightly smoked version.

The slightly smoked, crumbly textured ewe's milk Gomolya filled into intestines is thought to be a novelty, though it evokes an ancient technique. Its ewe aromas are enhanced by a slight smoking.

A part of the Gomolya cheeses also serves as an ingredient of several important products, e.g.: ewe's milk curd.

It is a special experience to taste these types of cheeses with fresh light bread, spring onions, paprika, tomatoes and a matching wine.

Matching wines:

Though basically the Gomolya cheeses are fresh cheeses, several varieties of wines may match them depending on the basic ingredient (ewe's, cow's or goat's milk) of the cheeses, the various spices used for flavouring and their smoking. The classic, fresh, unflavoured Gomolya and a not too complex, light, clear fresh white wine strike a perfect harmony. This wine may be a good Riesling or Kövidinka wine from the Alföld or similar clear wines. If the Gomolya is seasoned with other spices or herbs (garlic, aromatic herbs) or it is made of a more marked, stronger flavoured ewe's or goat's milk it can be paired with a dry white wine with a slightly stronger character, it could even be a wine from a hilly area. Avoid aromatic wines! Good Rieslings, some of Márai's (a Hungarian writer) favourites (from the Lake Balaton region, Siklós, Eger) slender Furmint from the foothills, Pinot Gris, Zenit from Mátraalja are good companions. If the cheese, like in our picture, is slightly smoked, a more full-bodied white wine matches it, which is capable of emphasising its own aromas properly. Such wine could come from the volcanic Balaton Highlands region or the great white wines of Somló could be a good match.

For those who love red wine, a classic Hungarian Schiller wine is recommended, possibly from Kadarka grapes, which is light enough for a fresh Gomolya but already carries the characteristics of a red wine.



Kneaded cheese

The family of boiled, kneaded cheeses have several popular members. Our Parenyica cheeses, which have been made in the Carpathian Basin for a long time, our Hajdú cheeses and the Kashkaval type cheeses that are made in Hungary and all over the Balkans are our characteristic and traditional products. Apart from them, the „cheese constructors” of the new age come up with infinite ideas and make new products, new rolls out of kneaded cheeses. The other homeland of kneaded cheeses is Italy, where it is a tradition to make such cheeses. Some of them now count as world classics. Think of Mozzarella, which is indispensable for pizzas or Scamorza, which is produced in different versions almost everywhere, also in Hungary in the last decade.

When these cheeses are made, the coagulated and properly sour curd is scalded with boiling water, then kneaded, thus the cheese paste becomes flexibly expandable, its structure becomes characteristically threadlike and can be shaped in various forms. The substance of Parenyica, for example, is stretched into wide flat strips and then rolled up and tied with a thread made of cheese mass. It is often smoked but non-smoked versions also exist. The Kashkaval and the Hajdú cheeses are put into round cheese moulds and matured for as long as several months. Such cheeses never have holes or eyes. They can be cut well, they are usually semi-hard depending on their maturation. They can also become hard when in a matured state.

Mozzarella is sold fresh without maturation usually in salty water in variously sized ball forms: it can fit any light dishes with its rather neutral flavours. It is mainly used as an ingredient for salads and for cocktail snacks. It has a version developed for pizzas, which is a little drier, has a long stick shape and can be sliced well.

Hajdú cheese does not have holes, it has an elastic texture, cuts well. It has a characteristic full flavour. It is made with cow's milk on the Alföld.

A completely new product group has been produced of kneaded cheeses named „Ínyenc” (Gourmand). A part of them includes roll-shaped delicacies stuffed with vegetables and spices (e.g. with spinach, carrots). The other half includes smoked cheeses stuffed with sausage or ham.

Matching wines:

Plain non-ripened Mozzarella is not consumed on its own, so add wine to it as a companion depending on its use. It is often used with tomatoes and basil and in Mediterranean salads. The most perfect harmony can be achieved in such cases with a fresh Rosé wine. Well-cooled, excellent Rosé wines of Szekszárd and Villány will prove to be perfect companions with their fresh acids and light aroma. As regards pizzas, if the dominant flavours come from Mozzarella and the obligatory tomatoes, the Rosé wine can also be a good choice but here rather the more full-bodied Schiller Rosé may offer the best matching or perhaps, depending on other ingredients used for the pizza, a light, slender red wine.

The Hajdú cheese and the cheese specialities stuffed with vegetables could also cooperate with both an assertive dry white wine and a Schiller.



Wine and Cheese from Hungary

Semi-hard cheeses



These are the cheeses in Hungary and also worldwide one of the largest family of cheeses. Our popular cheeses consumed every day are the Trappist, Edam, Óvár, Gouda in all their domestic and import versions but these also include the more special ones seasoned with caraway seed, garlic or something similar. They have the following features in common: they are made of pasteurised cow's milk, cut well, their gastronomic and cooking uses are universal. The difference between such semi-hard cheeses and hard cheeses is only that semi-hard cheeses have less dry matter and more water, thus they are easier to cut and faster to mature. There is also an overlap between the two groups of cheeses, when a semi-hard cheese becomes more mature it may become considerably harder.

Trappist cheeses, which are the most popular ones in Hungary for some unknown reason, account for 80 % of total cheese sales. They are practically produced everywhere. They were originally produced by French Trappist monks after the French revolution and later they spread due to their popularity. They are made in a lot of places but they are different everywhere. The cheese produced in Hungary now hardly resembles the original Trappist cheese. It is made of pasteurised cow's milk the curd is heated, then pressed, salted in a salty bath and gets to the market after a maturation of 4-5 weeks. Its fat content is about 45 %. Due to its relatively neutral flavour it can be used in many ways. Today's Hungarian version of the Edam cheese known and made around the world is largely similar to the Trappist cheese. The essential difference is that its paste is less fat (cca 40%), and its dry matter content is lower. Its flavours and the areas of its use are identical.

One of the Hungarian cheeses that have been made since the turn of the 19th / 20th centuries is the famous Óvár cheese, which was developed at the time after the German Tilsiter. It is also made with a similar technology but here, after the whey has been drawn, the curd is cooled down, so the paste becomes full of small, evenly distributed eyes. Long ago the rind of the Óvári was washed while ripened, so a slight rouge flora was produced on it, its taste became more characteristic. Today it is dried after salting and matured for 3-4 weeks packed in a foil. Its fat content is the same as that of the Trappist: about 45 %.

Perhaps the most popular version of the semi-hard varieties, though being still in the background in Hungary, is the Dutch Gouda, which has been produced in the Netherlands for at least 500 years. The Hungarian Gouda cheese contains the most fat compared to the other cheeses listed here previously, 48%. While matured, usually paraffin-wax is rubbed on its rind to avoid the cheese becoming too dry and it also strengthens its characteristic flavour. It requires a maturation of 2-3 months at least. (The Dutch mature a part of the cheeses for more than a year, which makes the cheeses fairly hard in texture with a few irregular holes evenly distributed and they will become more aromatic.)

There is a Hungarian cheese speciality produced since the beginning of the 1950s, the caraways seed cheese from Tolna county. Its speciality is due to its low fat content (about 10%) as it is made of low-fat pasteurised milk and the curd is seasoned with the caraway seed, which gives a delicious flavour to the cheese.

An excellent Hungarian semi-hard cheese produced from the mid-90s is the Borseprósajt (wine-sweeping cheese), which is characterised by small eyes and holes. Its speciality is that its rind is washed with fine red wines while matured, which produces an elegant blackish purple coating on the surface of the cheese.

Matching wines:

Considering the average level of maturity of these Hungarian cheeses, their relatively neutral flavours, which are free of extremes, the best match is offered by the medium-bodied, fine, dry, rounded white wines as a general rule. If you come across a more mature or over-ripe variety you can choose a great white wine produced on volcanic soil. On the other hand, as these cheeses are rather universal, you can equally choose lighter structured but characteristic red wines, depending on the individual taste. These wines could be lighter red wines from the southern shores of Lake Balaton, from Sopron, Szekszárd, Eger, Mátra Foothills like Kadarka, Kékoportó, Zweigelt, Kékfrankos, Pinot Noir or their blendings. These cheeses could marry well with the lighter red wines of the Alföld.



Whey cheeses – Ordas



They can also be listed among fresh cheeses but due to their special making the so-called whey cheeses should be dealt with apart. The fat content of the whey produced at making the cheese is already very low but its protein content is still considerable. These proteins are sensitive to heat so they can be extracted with an appropriate procedure and they offer a good basis for a light, low-fat, fresh cheese. To achieve this, the whey is heated and the white, crumbly substance separated is the Orda, which in its pure state has a slightly sweet taste. It can be made from the whey of any sort of milk. It used to be known in Hungary for a very long time but it was forgotten for some reason and then in the last decade a couple of cheese-producing companies were set up and they started to produce Orda again. So Orda has been on the market since then.

Only few people know that Ricotta so popular and known all over the world, which meanwhile appeared on the Hungarian market and is also produced by several Hungarian companies, is nothing else but an Orda cheese. So a strange duplicity was brought about on the cheese market, Orda is sold under both names. What is more, some cheese producers give other names to their products, too. This makes buyers' lives slightly more difficult when buying Orda cheeses.

Basically two main types exist. One of them is the plain, unseasoned version, which is slightly sweet so it readily lends itself for filling desserts, making cakes, creams and can be consumed with fruits. The other version, which is salty (Soma product family), is often flavoured with various aromatic herbs. Both of them have a low fat content (below 10 %), which make these dairy products especially attractive.

Matching wines:

The various salty versions can be paired with light, fresh white wines recommended for consumption with other light, fresh cheeses. Well-cooled, light, dry Rosé wines with vigorous acids are a perfect match for these cheeses.

Due to their sweet flavour, naturally sweet whey cheeses, when used either sweetened or mixed with ripe fruits as cottage cream cheeses or fillings of desserts, harmonise with suitable semi-dry or possibly semi-sweet white wines or Rosé wines. The aromatic varieties, Irsai Olivér, Ottonel Muskotály, Sárgamuskotály, Cserszegi fűszeres with some residual sugar are the right varieties to try.

Wine and Cheese from Hungary

Goat's milk cheeses

This family of cheeses is a separate family because the base material is the same, which is goat's milk. Although within this family numerous different methods of cheese-making are possible, ranging from light, fresh curd through cream cheeses and soft cheeses to the more matured ones.

Hungarian goat's milk cheese making is far less modest than cheese-making from other types of milk. This has partly an answer in history, because goat keeping was significant on the hilly areas surrounding historical Hungary and much less so in the middle flat areas. In addition, the real scenes of goat's milk cheese making are small farms and mainly family farms, which having revived in the last decade make goat's milk products and take them to the markets. Only a few big companies produce a big quantity of goat's milk cheese. And these are mainly soft, fresh cheeses.

On the other hand, a new goat's milk cheese family has appeared on the Hungarian market, besides the French-made cheeses which had previously ruled the market without rivals. The new fresh cheeses having a wide choice are made in Southern Trans-Danubia, in almost all versions and all degrees of maturation, from *orda* to *Gomolya*. Apart from them

semi-hard cheeses ripened for at least three weeks and hard cheeses matured for three months are also produced. The latter ones with stronger matured aromas. An absolute speciality is the extra hard cheese matured for more than six months, which is extraordinarily rich in aromas, is a Parmesan type cheese.



Matching wines:

Goat's milk cheeses, depending on their variety, tend to offer their full enjoyment value when drunk with white wines but very light red wines may also be suitable. The fresh curd and cream cheeses and unripened fresh cheeses require light, fresh dry white wines: Zenit, Zengő, Riesling, Rizlingszilváni but young Szürkebarát or Ezerjő could also be good companions. If you have a more mature cheese on your plate it is worthwhile choosing a more mature aromatic white wine, which might have received barrel maturation like Siklósi Hárslevelű or a really characteristic Sauvignon Blanc (Etyek-Buda wine-growing region, the Lake Balaton region, Neszémly), which makes the similarly characteristic flavours of the goat's milk cheese emerge wonderfully. If you choose red wine, you should favour nice, fresh Kadarka, slender fruity Kékfrankos or Kékoportó from Szekszárd or Hajós.



Göcseji cheese

These characteristically Hungarian cow milk's cheeses have been made at Zalaegerszeg since the 1930s, where the raw material is provided by the south-western Transdanubian milk producers. After the Second World War production of these cheeses was suspended for a short time but it was re-started in the 1960s. They are made in the shape of a brick, with a height of 7-9 cm and weigh about 2.5 kg. The surface of the cheese is pale yellow and it has a moist touch. Its texture is a border case between semi-hard and soft cheeses. It is generally without eyes, with a pleasantly sour, lactic acid taste, dissolves easily in the mouth, its relative fat content is nearly 50 %.

It is usually sold packed in foil after a maturation time of 3-4 weeks. Earlier it used to be matured with rouge too, then it was more aromatic.

Nowadays besides the plain version, Göcsej Csemegesajt is made with several seasoning additives and it has made it a whole cheese family.

In its caraway seed version the typical aroma of caraway seed complements its flavours.

In the green pepper version the whole or roughly ground fresh green pepper added to the cheese paste lends piquant flavours to the cheese. The hot paprika version gives a slightly hot tone to the flavours of the cheese, so pleasant to the Hungarian palate.

The Göcsej Csemegesajt can be the favourite of cheese-lovers in all its versions. It is not suitable for grating due to its semi-soft texture, it is worthwhile enjoying it by itself in the company of some good bread, fine wine and other accessories.

Matching wines:

The unseasoned versions of Göcsej cheese could be easily accompanied by smooth, light white wines, Rosés, Schillers or even light red wines, depending on the individual taste.

Because of the characteristic flavours of the green pepper, the Göcsej cheese flavoured with green pepper could be superbly matched by a nice characteristic Sauvignon Blanc, the grassy aromas or sometimes nettle flavours of which back up green pepper nicely. Some young northern reductive Chardonnay show discreet Sauvignon tones, these could be used very well, too. The paprika flavour of the Göcsej cheese seasoned with hot paprika may be emphasised by a suitable, fresh Rosé or Schiller, possibly those which have flavours reminding of dissolved paprika (this is quite frequent with Kékfrankos Rosés from northern wine-growing regions) these wines also counterbalance the hotness of the paprika.



Wine and Cheese from Hungary

Pannónia, the queen of Hungarian hard cheeses

In Central Europe and in Hungary as well, one of the most popular and most universally used cheeses is the Swiss Emmenthal or to be more precise in Hungary it is Pannónia, the “earthly copy” made in Hungary. This hard cheese made of cow’s milk, is the best known member of its family, and can be easily recognised by the dense, big eyes. The original Swiss/French versions are made of fresh milk even today but those made of pasteurised milk are also widespread world-wide. Such is Hungarian Pannónia cheese, too. It is easy to cut due to its texture. When making such cheeses, the coagulated cheese milk is cut by a Swiss harp into strips of very fine particles, then the curd is heated (so that the cheese becomes firm enough) and it is pressed into moulds after the whey is strained off. It is then matured for 6-8 weeks. Meanwhile, as a result of the maturation at a higher temperature, the propionic acid starts making the characteristic holes.

Now Pannónia cheeses have a brick shape, weighing 2.5 kg but they are also sold on the market in half blocks as well as smaller pieces and sliced or grated. Those who love more matured flavours and have patience, should mature the cheese more in its original wrapping. It is worthwhile, they will realise it. The Emmenthal type cheese has a characteristic nutty flavour with a fine, elegant bitter end-of-taste, which goes very well with grapes, nuts or apples. It is a real pleasure to taste such cheeses by themselves. This experience can be enhanced by a matching wine.



Matching wines:

What should the accompanying wine be? Well, it should be a rich white wine, rich in aromas to match. Like so many other times, here also the actual level of maturity of the cheese is a factor of importance. The Pannónia usually favours white wines which belong to the semi-heavy category, which are produced from not too complex but suitably ripened noble varieties. A one or two-year-old, medium-bodied Chardonnay made with reductive technology (not barrique matured) from Siklós, Mátra Foothills, Lake Balaton region makes a suitable match. A Zenit, Hárslevelű or Furmint can join the line. If you have on your table a more matured version of the cheese, choose more mature and more full-bodied versions of the wines listed above. You can also choose from the fine Hungarian white wines grown on volcanic soil, which have special aromas characteristic of the wine-growing region (Badacsony, Káli Basin, Somló, Hegyalja). If you wish to drink red wine to your cheese, the best matchings are the fine versions of the Pinot Noir.



Ewe's milk cheeses

This family of cheeses are handled apart because of their base material, which is the ewe's milk.

The quality of ewe's milk cheeses surpasses that of cow's milk cheeses in many respects. In small farms ewe's milk is added to cow's milk in varying proportions when the cheese is processed so that they can produce higher quality and more delicious cheeses. This method of cheese-making was already known in the Roman Empire.

The ewe's milk cheeses of the Felvidék (Upper Hungary before 1920) Transylvania and the Alföld used to be famous. There used to be some popular varieties like the ewe's milk Ostiepka, Parenyica, the ewe's milk cheeses and layered milk of Pusztamonostor. The Zsendice was made of the heated whey remaining from cheese-making and the orda drawn from it was also consumed.

Unfortunately today on the Hungarian "playing field" the choice is rather narrow of these cheese varieties as there are fewer sheep in Hungary now than on the bigger territory of the former Hungary. Nevertheless some excellent producers make excellent ewe's milk cheeses. These are practically semi-hard cheeses, some of them are semi-hard Kashkaval types.

The Merino cheese from southern Alföld is a well-matured, fat, semi-hard cheese. It is made of pure ewe's milk, it has an excellent, characteristically firm flavour, it satisfies all needs of ewe's milk cheese lovers.

Similarly in the south-eastern part of the Alföld Kashkaval type ewe's milk cheeses are produced. This cheese variety is not only produced in Hungary but all over the Balkan as well under the same or similar names from ewe's milk. The Awassi ewe's milk cheese is easy to cut, its paste is fragile when bent, it dissolves in the mouth, it has a characteristic salty aroma. Its fat content is about 40%. It has varieties made with mixed milk under the name of "juhtejes sajt" (cheese with ewe's milk), it has 50% cow's milk and 50% ewe's milk. Its fat content is about 47%, otherwise it is similar to the other varieties. Both cheese is sold in elegant foil of a crescent shape.

A good quality ripened ewe's milk cheese is made in the southern Transdanubian region, in Baranya county two sorts of ewe's milk cheese are produced in addition to goat's milk cheeses. A semi-hard one which is ripened for at least 3 weeks and a softer Roquefort type cheese ripened with blue mould for at least 70 days, called merinofort.

Matching wines:

Really aromatic ewe's milk cheeses need a properly aroma rich wine accompaniment. That is why you should try great white wines to go with ewe's milk cheeses. The more mature and more aromatic a ewe's milk cheese is the braver you can be. You can achieve splendid taste effect by properly ripe wines from the Balaton Highlands (the concentrated white wines of Badacsony, the Káli Basin and the surroundings) and wines from Somló, mostly the Furmint or Hárslevelű. There are great white wines like the Hárslevelű at Siklós, possibly those which were matured in big wooden barrels, which are just the right ones for these cheeses. You can also choose good companions to ewe's milk cheeses from the more full-bodied varieties of the dry Furmints of Tokaj-hegyalja. From among the red wines a fine southern Pinot Noir from Villány or a velvety Kékoportó from the same region or an exceptionally fine very fruity Cabernet Sauvignon from wine-growers in the southern Balaton region make a perfect match with a mature ewe's milk cheese. If you have the opportunity it is worthwhile trying both white and red wines to ewe's milk cheese, as one and the other will make you taste a different flavour of the ewe's milk cheese.

The bread that goes with the cheese and wine should be dark whole-meal rye bread made with traditional sour leaven.



Wine and Cheese from Hungary

White mould soft cheeses



Or as their French creators call them the bloom skinned cheeses. This is the world famous Brie and Camembert family, which due to their extraordinary popularity are made all over the world. Luckily these varieties have “settled down” in Hungary, too (though only from the 1970s). They are made by a few Hungarian producers, their choice is growing. We are proud of the Hungarian Camembert, which are becoming better and better.

Camembert and Brie are originally made of fresh milk but today they are more often made of pasteurised cow's milk, though its goat's milk versions are also known (in Hungary they are only made of pasteurised milk). The pre-fermented milk is renneted, then usually directly scooped into moulds and after the whey is dipped off its surface is inoculated with the characteristic noble mould (*penicillium candidum*), finally it is left blooming in a lukewarm, humid, airy storing place. It is ripened for 2-6 weeks, meanwhile a snow-white noble mould crust appears and covers the surface of the cheese. These cheeses are never pressed so their texture remains soft and become softer and creamy with the maturation time, they could even be fluid when over-mature.

Such cheeses become rich in aromas as a result of maturation. At the beginning of maturation their paste is relatively firm it resists the pressure of fingers. Their smell resembles most fresh mushrooms. With maturation their consistency becomes softer it does not resist the finger pressure. The cutting surface of the cheese looks buttery light, creamy. If it is more mature it will be runny at the cutting surface and the white mould covering the cheese changes to yellowish-brownish first on the edges then on the rest of the surface. The aromas are stronger and stronger and may turn ammoniac when the cheese is over-mature.

The fat content of these cheeses (in dry matter) is between 45-60 %. This percentage may be increased by adding cream to the curd.

In Hungarian production the Bakony is the oldest, this was followed by the appearance of the Tihany cheese and later the Séd Brie. Both Camemberts

have grown an extended family since then. In addition to the plain, unseasoned versions they are produced with various flavourings (garlic and aromatic herbs, chives, pepper, caraway seeds). New products have been introduced, the Géramont and the Diadal (victory) this latter one is softly creamy with a fat content of 58 %.

The other Hungarian brand is the Chevalier family. Under this name superbly matured Camembert and Brie cheeses are produced in their original, plain, unseasoned versions. The manufacturing company only produces white noble mould cheeses.

There is only one Camembert cheese made of goat's milk

Matching wines:

White moulded cheeses can be paired with several varieties of wines. It may depend on the maturity of the cheese, the taster's preference and the season. If the cheese is at the beginning of its ripeness and it is a hot summer a well-cooled dry Rosé or Schiller is a perfect match (Szekszárd and Villány are preferred wine-growing regions). If, on the other hand, the cheese is at a higher level of maturity, it should be paired with a light, fruity red wine, in which the tannins are velvety. It could be a splendid Kékoportó or its blending preferably from Villány and from a fresh vintage. In late autumn, early winter its primeur variety is also perfect. A good companion would be similarly from the same region or from Szekszárd a Zweigelt or a Pinot Noir is, this latter one has especially fine varieties in Eger. Some wine-growers produce light, elegant Pinot Noir even in the vicinity of Badacsony. A Kadarka of an outstanding vintage preferably from Szekszárd or a slender Merlot from the same region could also play the grateful role of a companion to the noble white moulded cheese.



„Rouge” skinned cheeses



„Rouge” skinned cheeses usually make the other significant group of soft cheeses. They are also called washed skinned cheeses because of the red (rouge) mouldy crust appearing on their surface, their colour often has an orange tone. What is common in them is that all of them are well-matured cheeses with an assertive and aromatic odour which, with the maturation time, becomes more intense and often resembles animal odours.

The ancestors and relatives of these cheeses are to be found mainly in the French northern regions. The first phase of their making is roughly the same as that of the white mould soft cheeses. So they are made of pre-fermented milk, the shaped cheese is put into a bath or its surface is regularly washed with a solution. This gradually bring about the rouge film, which gives a characteristically strong flavour to the cheese.

A part of the Hungarian filmy skinned cheeses belongs to the semi-hard category. These are the Lajta cheese and the ilmici (called also the Moson county csemegeajjt) which are closely related to each other. The ilmici has been produced since 1914, the Lajta since the 1930s from pasteurised cow's milk. These are Óvári type cheeses, which during maturation are washed with salty water mixed with colour flora of *brevibacterium linens*

every day or every other day, which makes them form a yellowish reddish flora in 3-4 weeks. The wheel-shaped 2-3 kg ilmici is wrapped in silver foil, the brick shaped Lajta weighing about one kg is wrapped in gold foil. The paste of both types of cheeses is characterised by evenly distributed small eyes. The dry matter content of the Ilmici is somewhat higher, its fat content is 42 %, whereas the Lajta is juicier with a fat content of 50 %. Both of them are slightly piquant and become more piquant with maturity. As a general rule, the Lajta is slightly more piquant and harsher than the Ilmici. In the 1930s Magyaróvár was the scene of the development of the fine, decent, slightly soft “teasajt” (teacheese) in the shape of a small brick. It dissolves softly in the mouth and is easy to cut. Compared to the previously listed cheeses the film formation is slighter, so it is just mildly “smelly”. It is also the northern western region that gave birth to the bravest Hungarian cheese, the “Pálpusztai”, which has been made since the beginning of the 20th century modelled on the Belgian Limburg and Romadour type cheeses. This cheese matures with real “rouge”, its surface is yellowish-reddish, slightly slimy. Its paste dissolves softly in the mouth, it is distinctively piquant, slightly ammoniac. The small 50 gramm cheeses get to the market after a maturation time of 2-3 weeks in tinfoil. It is, and it has always been the favourite cheese of the determined cheese lovers. There are two excellent rouge filmy cheeses from the Tolna region of Transdanubia. The splendid “Szekszárdi csemegeajjt” produced from 1880s has been made again since the 1960s, the “Tamási csemegeajjt” has been developed in recent years. Both are so called mixed matured semi-hard cheeses, that is they are matured for 4 weeks with rouge, then the rouge flora is dried off, which makes its flavour mild, then the 2.5 kb wheel of the Tamási csemege is covered with wax, the szekszárdi is coloured yellow, then both of them are matured for another 2 weeks.

Matching wines:

Out of the cheeses the rouge skinned are the ones that require full-bodied red wines. Their distinctively strong, assertive flavours usually prefer similarly assertive wine companions. Nevertheless, you cannot exclude a great white wine in some cases. On the other hand, the Hungarian rouge skinned cheeses, with the exception of “Pálpusztai”, do not belong to the most distinctive rouge skinned ones, they are rather from among the milder types. So you should keep off the great wine bombs. You are advised to choose from among full-bodied, rich, mature red wines. A mature Szekszárdi Merlot perhaps blended with a Cabernet Franc is a perfect match. A suitable match would be concentrated, mature Kékoportó or some outstanding Zweigelt or Kékfrankos from great wine-growers in the Villány region. You should not aim for barrique maturation, try those matured in wooden barrels or having only a slight barrique flavour. An outstanding, rich Pinot Noir also promises a nice harmony. The very strong taste of the “Pálpusztai” can only be matched with a great red wine, you can bravely open a bottle of new-barrel Cabernet from Villány or Szekszárd.

Smoked cheeses



Although the Greeks and the Romans smoked some cheeses, at that time the reasons were mainly that it made preservation easier. It is interesting that Latin countries, so much fond of cheese, rarely resort to this device. The Central and Eastern European nations, among them the Hungarians, on the other hand, use smoking so much that it could appear exaggeration. It is a fact that year by year more and more smoked cheeses appear, or to be more precise smoked versions appear of cheeses which have not had smoked varieties before. As regards texture, usually semi-hard cheeses and kneaded cheeses are smoked but there is also a processed cheese which has a smoked variety, the "karaván" cheese, which is one of the most popular smoked cheese in terms of sales.

In addition, smoke appears on Gomolya cheeses, too. The new products include special ones, where the cheese paste kneaded by hand is twisted around smoked sausage and the whole is smoked again. Within the same "inyenc" product family there are smoked cheeses similarly kneaded by hand, filled with ham or smoked salmon. The "hajdú" cheeses, whose

cheese paste is kneaded, also include smoked varieties. The main variety of the Hungarian-made scamorza, which is of Italian origin, is smoked.

At the same time the production of two of the Hungarian smoked cheeses which have old traditions has strongly declined and has been suspended, respectively.

The long-time popular zalai smoked cheese produced since 1930, which has been sold in cylindrical shape since the 1980s and has excelled with its discreet, elegant, smoky flavour, is hardly sold today. The other such cheese is the hamcheese from Békés county, which was made as early as the 18th century by shepherds and the industrial production started after the Second World War turned the originally ewe's milk cheese into a cow's milk kneaded smoked cheese. Its ham shape makes it a real ornament of cheese platters. Its production has been suspended lately. The other classical Hungarian smoked cheese, the parenyica, enjoys an uninterrupted popularity. It originates from the northern counties of the historical Hungary, originally made of ewe's milk it is a kneaded cheese stretched into strips, which are then rolled up, it is smoked golden yellow. It has also been produced on the Alföld for a long time, though it is also made on the Slovakian Highlands. The parenyica is mainly made of cow's milk nowadays. It has a delicious smoky flavour, from the outside it has an oily shine, inside it has fibres. When rolled off, its spongy strips of paste look very decorative. Its taste is almost identical with that of the ham cheese.

Lately Trappist cheeses have also been smoked both in their mini and big versions. Besides, there are a several other smoked cheeses but it is not possible to give details of all of them here in such little space.

Matching wines:

The world of smoked cheeses fits more the world of red wines. These cheeses, contrary to a lot of other types of cheeses have full bodies, assertive flavours to create harmony with full-bodied red wines. The recommended Hungarian wines could include Cabernet Sauvignon and Franc wines but new-barrel matured wines should only be chosen if the cheese is strongly smoked, this way the discreet smoked tones of the barrel will find a companion in the flavours of the smoked cheese. As cheeses are not smoked to the same extent attention should be paid to the differences when choosing a suitable wine. Mildly smoked cheeses could be coupled with great aromatic white whines (e.g. Hárslevelű, Furmint), medium-bodied red wines, as the level and intensity of smoking increases the wine companion should also be fuller-bodied (but never the fullest-bodied) like Cabernet and their blending of Szekszárd and Villány or Merlot, this latter one can be successful even if it is solo. The same great varieties could be chosen from Eger and Sopron but here the choice is smaller as regards vintage and growers. Of course, potential partners could be the great Bull's Blood of Szekszárd and Eger or an outstanding Kékfrankos. The splendidly velvety wine of the lately spreading Syrah grapes can also strike a perfect harmony with these cheeses.

Cottage cheeses in every variety

Due to their importance in Hungary cottage cheeses are dealt with under a separate heading. Cottage cheeses are a sort of fresh cheeses and in other parts of the world, except the German regions, there is no separate word for these cheeses, they are only mentioned as fresh cheeses.

Nothing could characterise more their importance than the fact that half of the total cheese consumption in Hungary is made up of cottage cheeses if cottage cheeses are also considered as cheeses.

There are several varieties but the biggest quantity is produced of a lumpy version made of cow's milk. Much less is produced of ewe's milk cottage cheese, while the cottage cheese made of goat's milk is considered a rarity. The position of cow's milk cottage cheese was strengthened centuries ago because it was a dish eaten during Lent. Originally it was mainly consumed in the Transdanubian region, today we can say that it is one of the basic pillars of Hungarian cuisine. There are numerous dairy companies which produce and sell cottage cheese. In peasant farms it used to be home-made. The fresh milk was coagulated and after skimming it was heated, then filled into a linen cloth and the whey was drawn. The result is a white lumpy cottage cheese with low fat content, which has a sour, fresh flavour. It is versatile. It is eaten by itself or with bread and sour cream, aromatic herbs or used as a base material for cakes, creams and fillings.

Ewe's milk cottage cheese is made of classical ewe's milk Gomolya, which is cut, ground and stirred with butter and salt until a proper texture is achieved. It is indigenous in former Northern Hungary (Liptow curd), and also in the sheep-farms on the Alföld. It is a fat cream cheese with a granulous texture, dissolving easily in the mouth.

The popular Hungarian "körözött" is a mixture made of the two cottage cheeses mentioned earlier or it can also be made separately of either of them. Its recipe varies from region to region but the indispensable ingredi-

ents are red paprika, finely chopped onion, salt and butter. Some recipes include mustard, caraway seeds, capers or sour cream. It goes very well with wines. It is usually made at home in the households and everybody is proud of their own recipes. Nevertheless, lately some cheese producing companies have made "körözött".

Among cottage cheeses a mention should be made of Ordas as well but they have already been covered earlier. Goat's milk cottage cheese, which is considered to be a rarity, is made by some farms, mainly family farms, and it is sold on the markets.

Matching wines:

It depends on the type of cottage cheese which wine should be chosen to accompany it. Pure, fresh cow's milk cottage cheese by itself matches well fresh white wines or Rosés recommended under the fresh cheeses heading. The much fattier ewe's milk cottage cheese with much more assertive flavours goes well with more full-bodied white wines but light red wines also make a good companion.

If you want to choose a wine to go with the "körözött", the best match is a delicious, fine Hungarian white wine with proper acidity, matured in big wooden barrels or another classical success is a Schiller wine made of Kadarka, which often reveals a taste of paprika in it.



Wine and Cheese from Hungary

Blue-veined cheeses: The marble cheese



In true cheese gourmards' camp this type of cheese is the queen of cheeses. Its main representative is the famous Roquefort, which has a lot of relatives and "subjects" all over the world. All nations that produce cheeses have their own version of a blue-vein cheese. Most of them are made of cow's milk, except the original Roquefort, which is made of fresh ewe's milk only. Attention! The name is strictly protected! Only those cheeses can be called Roquefort which were made in that French region under defined circumstances and regulations. All the other similar cheeses are called blue-vein cheeses. In Hungary the national blue-vein cheese is only the Márványsajt (Marble cheese), which is made in Baranya county and is matured in the cellars of Villány.

The essence of making blue-vein cheeses is that a noble mould called *penicillium roqueforti* is added to the milk or the curd, which then develops in the lump gaps as a blue-green mould after the cheese is formed and pressed. To help this process the blocks of cheeses are pricked with needles before maturation. Oxygen gets into the lump gaps following the way of the long needle to help develop mould, meanwhile noble mould develops also in the channels of the needle pricks, thus producing marbleness. Blue-vein cheeses are matured for 3-4 months in humid caves, cellars with a good air current of air, and they are usually sold in aluminium foil.

The Hungarian Marble cheese is made of pasteurised milk. It is pleasantly piquant when properly matured and its paste is crumbly. Its maturity is

revealed by the level of marbleness in its cut. The cheese ripens from the inside, that is the noble mould first spreads inside and proceeds towards outside.

Blue-vein cheeses are sensitive, it is advisable to temperate them unpacked at room temperature before they are used, they should be aired for at least half an hour so that their aromas could develop fully. They are cut with a Swiss harp or with a cheese knife which has a very thin blade.

Matching wines:

There is no single wine to go with these cheeses. Various matchings are possible and usual. Earlier blue mould cheeses were accompanied with very round but fairly great Burgundy red wines. Now natural sweet wines are preferred more. The Hungarian Marble cheese, when it is medium-mature, harmonises perfectly with a fine Tokaj sweet Szamorodni or a 3-4 puttony Aszú. It is important that the wine should not be too sweet. You should choose the ones in which the balance between sweetness and acids is perfect. You can find these more easily from grapes grown on slopes north of Tolcsva. The wine does not have to be too aged, the main thing is that there should be freshness at the end. The Tokaj turning could be ideal as well, though it is rarely sold. All this together with a bite of wholemeal nut bread and a couple of dried fruits is a real treat!



Processed cheeses



This type of cheese was first made in the 1910s in Switzerland and then in the United States. The cheeses used as basis were melted with the salts of sodium citrate and sodium phosphate so that cheeses were made with constant homogeneous texture. First the aim of processing was to use and re-process odd lots of cheeses but later due to its increasing popularity production started with assorted base materials to achieve higher quality.

The essence of the production is that various hard cheeses which serve as base material are cut, their water content is precisely regulated by adding water, milk powder, whey etc. Then it is stirred with emulsifying salts in a cauldron, heated to a proper texture and ultra pasteurised above 100 C, then formed while still hot, cooled down and packaged. Such product is durable and keeps a long time without perishing.

As many countries, as many versions. In Hungarian cheese consumption processed cheeses account for a considerable part. In line with that producers come up with infinite ideas about different versions. First, variations were found for adding paprika, sausage, mushrooms etc. In addition to the originally block-like processed cheeses round boxes appeared on the market, too. Later different shapes were used, like tubes, flacons, jars, etc. Then came the sliced sheet cheese. Who knows what else ingenious producers will invent.

The main groups of processed cheeses of today: block cheeses that can be cut, cheese spreads (mainly triangular cheeses), cream cheeses sold in tubes, flacons.

Some of the earliest Hungarian processed cheeses are still produced. The Derby cheese is from the beginning of the 20th century. It is made of Trappist and Gomolya, it is a fatty cream cheese, packed in round boxes. The dominant brand was already the "Medve" (bear) before the Second

World War but this protected name was not allowed to be used after nationalisation. So "Mackó" (little bear) was born, which was a favourite cheese of children. In the 1970s the Bear cheese was reborn. In the middle of the 1990s the Bear brand name was extended to the majority of processed cheese with various flavourings developed meanwhile so the bear family has several "bear-cubs". There are versions with ham, sausage, salami, hot paprika, aromatic herbs, onion, mushrooms, horseradish, cream and light with low fat content. Some of them are available in jars and in hose shaped packaging, as well as in thin sheets. The Bear cheeses are outstanding among the other processed cheeses due to the Pannonia cheese used as base material.

At the same time the Mackó, Csárdás, and Boci cheeses still exist and have grown into large families. Various producers generate an overabundance of processed cheeses in various shapes, forms and texture.

Matching wines:

As this cheese family is very eclectic and the only common feature is the technique of procession it is not enough to suggest just one or two wines. The main principles of matching should be understood. As most processed cheeses are made with some added flavourings which are dominant in the flavour of the cheese you should keep in mind this dominant element when choosing a wine.

The plain, creamy neutral versions go well with light, neutral white wines or perhaps a smooth Rosé. The stronger, spicier versions with sausage, salami, paprika etc. can be matched with any wine ranging from medium-bodied white wines, through Rosés and Schiller wines to very light red wines, depending on the individual taste.

Wine and Cheese from Hungary





Agrarmarketing Centrum

1042 Budapest, Árpád út 51-53.
Postacím: H-1325 Budapest, Pf. 340.
Tel.: (+36) 1 450 8800, Fax: (+36) 1 450 8801
E-mail: info@amc.hu • Internet: www.amc.hu

