



## ESSEX COMTÉ RESERVATION FROM MARCEL PETITE, FORT ST. ANTOINE

Made in Eastern France in the cooperative dairies of the Jura mountains. Aged in the renowned caves of Marcel Petite's Fort St. Antoine. The underground fort is renowned as the aging vault for much of France's best Comté; it is a temple of cheese, housing over a hundred thousand wheels. We're not the only importer sourcing cheese from this location. But no other importer comes to taste the cheese at all, let alone ten times per year. No other importer gets cheeses that are as consistent, as balanced, and as deeply flavored.

---

<b>VISUAL CHARACTERISTICS</b>	Flat, millstone shape; 75–85 lbs; 25-30 inches in diameter.
<b>CATEGORY OF CHEESE</b>	Hard, pressed, cooked, cow's milk cheese.
<b>SCALE OF PRODUCTION</b>	Made in cooperative cheese dairies called "fruitières;" artisanal.
<b>MILK TYPE</b>	Raw cow's milk made from the Montbéliarde breed.
<b>CHEESEMAKING DETAILS AND PROCEDURE</b>	The manufacture of Comté remains the textbook reference for pressed, cooked-curd cheeses in France. After the curd mass is cut to hazelnut size, the curds are heated—cooked—in their own whey at 122F for 30 minutes. The curds are drained and dropped into large molds and pressed for 6 hours. The pliable "green" cheese is salted within 36 hours of production, then again every 48 hours for the next 3 weeks. After this pre-affinage phase, the young Comté is moved to the subterranean Fort Saint Antoine where it is matured under the scrupulous care of the head affineur, the chef de cave Claude Querry, and his team.
<b>AFFINAGE AND CHEESE MATURING NOTES</b>	Jason Hinds and his London-based partner, Dominic Hoyte, travel to Fort St. Antoine every six weeks. They select wheels that are an average of a year old using Neal's Yard Dairy's road-tested approach of taste, record, repeat, looking not just for flavor, but flavor that can last, as the wheel travels across the ocean. The goal is to deliver a cheese that expresses the range within aged comtés, a profile "with shoulders" compared to our "365" profile.
<b>APPEARANCE</b>	Paste that ranges from ivory to yellow depending on the season.
<b>SMELL AND AROMA</b>	Roasted notes of peanut. Cooked custard, dried fruit, dark bread, salt.
<b>FLAVOR</b>	Very deep, complex, long lasting. Always creamy and buttery with notes of cacao.
<b>SEASONAL AVAILABILITY</b>	Available all year. Predominately made from May to October when the cows are in pasture.
<b>WINE SUGGESTIONS</b>	A wide variety of wines go well with Comté. The local "vin jaune" from the Jura makes for one of the most successful (and memorable) cheese and wine marriages. Chardonnays from California. Rhone valley reds such as Chateauneuf du Pape.

---

