

Medical Friends of Wine
Cheese and Wine Event
Richmond Country Club
December 7, 2025

By Robert Blumberg, M.D., Cellarmaster and Event Chair

Cheeses

What a delightful and educational assortment of cheeses from around the world. Each was a cheese of so much character and complexity of flavors. The vast majority of large commercial products we buy so often from supermarkets seem generic and bland in comparison.

Tentation de Saint-Félicien. Cow's milk from France. A white, soft ripened triple crème with a luxurious feeling, but also considerable tartness and a strong finish. Went very nicely with sparkling wine as both wine and cheese show freshness and entice the appetite.

Brie Paysan. Cow. Fromagerie du Presbytère, Quebec: This is a strong flavored Brie-style cheese with definite garlicky tastes. More complex than most commercial Bries sold en masse. Soft texture, tart verging on sour finish. Initially a bit off-putting, but the complexity of flavors reigns. Very nice with the Bourboulenc.

Coppinger. Raw cow. From Sequatchie Grove, Tennessee: Pale yellow with ash in the middle like Morbier. A mature, delicious cheese with brown butter and cocoa flavors and finish. Goes nicely with Pinot Noir.

Alisios. Cow and Goat. Canary Islands: Light yellow. Reddish orange rind from paprika. Soft but dry feel; rich and creamy finish. Pleasantly piquant due to the paprika. Good with Cabernet as a richer wine holds up to the spiciness.

Fiocco Amatriciano. Sheep. Italy: Pale yellow. Very aromatic with a lemony butter aroma. Lovely and very dry in the mouth, with a tangy sour cream like edge. The fruit of the Pinot Noir goes well with this cheese.

Beaufort. Raw Cow. France: From the Savoie region, so close to Gruyère which explains the style similarity. Deep and intense brown butter flavors that just grow and grow as the cheese is slowly chewed. Both Pinot Noir and Cabernet accompany well depending on your wine preference, and actually the Port would be a nice accompaniment as a late evening snack.

Lincolnshire Poacher. Raw cow. UK: Medium yellow. A cheddar on steroids. Buttermilk aromas and flavor. Very dry texture. Salt and sweet components combine in the flavor.

Wonderful cheese. Like the Beaufort, both red wines went well, and the Port makes a special treat for a combination of wine and cheese.

The Wines

Louis Pommery England Brut: With climate warming, the southeast of England, once thought inhospitable to vines, is now looked to as a location where grapes favored for sparkling wine production can grow and flourish. As this same climate warming affects more traditional grape growing areas in Europe and elsewhere, wise French producers have purchased property in England to “hedge their bets” on finding the best properties for sparkling wine production.

This is the origin of this wine, and we chose it for its intrinsic quality and because we thought few members would have previously tasted an English sparkling wine. The wine showed beautifully. Fresh, fragrant, dry on the palate, and with perfectly balanced refreshing acidity and a touch of complex yeastiness. It is produced from a blend of Chardonnay, Pinot Meunier, and Pinot Noir. Cheese-wise, it pairs beautifully with creamy, young, fresh cheeses.

2023 Bourboulenc - Acquiesce Winery (Lodi): This varietal originates in the Southern Rhone region of France where it is blended with other white varietals to produce the dry white wines of the area. The grape requires heat to mature, yet retains its acidity to produce a generous yet tart wine. Very little is grown in California, and this one comes from the Acquiesce Winery in Lodi, where the Society had a delightful visit last spring. The climate of Lodi seems ideal for this varietal.

The wine lives up to its billing, with generous body and flavors in the mouth balanced by refreshing acidity. There is a lemony cast to the aroma. It is a nice alternative to Chardonnay. Although it may not have the complexity of the finest of Chardonnay, it is very drinkable and would pair well with most young to medium aged cheeses, both soft and firm.

2022 Brooks Note Winery Pinot Noir Petaluma Gap: This is another wine discovered during a Society Winery Tour, this one in the summer of 2024. The Petaluma Gap appellation is in Sonoma County west of Petaluma heading towards the Pacific. The cool ocean breezes temper summer temperatures, distinguishing Pinots from this area from their counterparts grown in warmer climes.

This is a light to moderate bodied Pinot with abundant Pinot character, yet tempered by lower alcohol and higher acidity than many. Less rich than competitors, it has more finesse, minerality, and in both aroma and flavor makes you feel like you are walking through a forest floor where the spicy and earthy character blends nicely with the berry and plum fruit and very slight mintiness. When asked which wine went with each cheese, this wine was most frequently mentioned by our guests. In fact, if I were forced to choose but one wine to accompany a cheese tasting, it would be a Pinot Noir.

2016 EMH Black Cat Cabernet Sauvignon: This wine is from a tiny producer in Calistoga, a warm area of the northern Napa Valley noted for producing rich, ripe, and generous wines. It was selected as a counter-foil to the Pinot Noir to give us a range of wine styles to pair with the cheeses. It filled this role well.

At nine years old, it still has potential to hold and age in bottle for a while. There is the body and tannin and ripe Cabernet character expected, yet there is also a lighter feel on the tongue that already entices another swallow. The more mature and more flavored cheeses paired well with this wine. The spicy and paprika coated Alisios particularly needed the depth of this Cabernet.

1983 Quarles Harris Vintage Port: Somehow colder weather and a holiday themed event calls out for a glass of Port, and it's not often we can afford to open a 40-plus-year-old wine. In an English gentry home, a glass of Port with a fine aged Cheddar or blue veined Stilton is a classic pairing. This wine went beautifully with the Lincolnshire, and actually also went well with our other very mature and full-flavored cheeses.

A great vintage occurs in Portugal about once per decade, and 1983 was that year for the eighties. This wine has retained excellent color. Upon first opening, there is a strong spirity nose but with decanting and resting for at least 6 hours, this settles down and the black plum fruit comes out. As it should be, the palate is rich and sweet. While drinking nicely at the moment, there is no hurry to drink this one up. A lovely Christmas drink to finish off a delightful afternoon of cheese and wine.