Exploring The Cheese Cave

by Laura Madsen

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The Cheese Cave is a hidden gem in Red Bank, NJ along the main drag of Monmouth Street. As you walk towards The Cheese Cave, you won't pass through woods, but you will pass by shop, after gallery, after restaurant, in a busy-but-not-too-busy downtown, eclectic, and thriving business district. Once upon a time, only locals knew about this delicious destination, but it is rapidly growing in its popularity and reputation since its opening in 2011. For gourmet cheeses that you simply can't find anywhere else, come here. And if you can find them elsewhere, you'd have to go to many different cheese shops, countries, and purveyors to acquire them.

The Cheese Cave is like your one-stop shopping paradise for all things cheese, and carefully selected accompaniments.

There are varieties of goat, cow, and sheep's milk cheeses, chutneys, crackers, preserves, charcuterie, sweets, and

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"sandwicheeses". (That last word is not a typo. The emphasis is on cheese in that coined phrase, invented by The Cheese Cave owner Stephen Catania.)

Many cheeses are aged in caves. Good cheese usually doesn't come mass-produced off of a conveyor belt. That is why the name "The Cheese Cave" is so fitting for this Red Bank, NJ foodie haven.

You can come into The Cheese Cave and take home some treasures, or stop in for a quick cheese fix; and they serve up cheese platters, salads, and sandwiches to stay or to go. Oh, and it's BYOB, so bring your favorite wine or beer, and owner Stephen Catania will help you pair it with the perfect cheese. That's right, any time of day, walk right in and bring your beverage of choice; and sit down with savory cheeses, maybe a few baguette slices, or a menu selection, and enjoy it with the perfect pairing of wine or beer. It may be a European concept, but you can't go wrong with bread, cheese, and a good bottle of wine (or beer).

The taste experience you will enjoy is anything but rudimentary.

"I'm a hospitality professional. My roots are in the kitchen. I went to culinary school and was a chef. It's people and hospitality that I love. It was a natural progression," states Catania.

Catania elaborates, "It all starts with understanding the flavors and giving people an experience they might otherwise not try. You eat with all of your senses. There needs to be a visual appeal and a taste appeal. I won't say cheese makes a lot of noise – but maybe after someone tries it there will be lots of 'ooohs!' and 'aaahs!'"

Meet the Big Cheese

When asked why he decided to get into the Cheese business, owner Steve Catania returned some questions of his own, "Why not?! Who Doesn't Love Cheese?!" When you visit The Cheese Cave, you get the opportunity to explore the realm of artisan cheeses,

"The Big Cheese", Steve Catania. Credit Daryl Meek of Digital.Artscape Photography. Reprinted from redbankpatch.com

step out of your comfort zone to find the best cheeses to appeal to your palate…all with Steve as your trusted tour guide. But don't ask him what his favorite cheese is! "Impossible!" he'll exclaim; though you may have a shot at a real answer if you ask "What is your favorite cheese TODAY?!"

http://youtu.be/FlxJ0nz2uZo