

Smile for local artisans and #SayCheese!

By Leigh Andrews

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If you're still fixated on yellow cheese and your favourite four varietals are cheddar, gouda, mozzarella and feta, best you visit the Say Cheese Fair later this year.

Having a cheese-filled lunch at the [@ItalianclubCT](#) ...getting sneak peak on what to expect at the [@saycheesefair](#) happening later this year   pic.twitter.com/g3BA3kLGor— Zola Nene (@zola_nene) July 27, 2017

Sticks of solid oak-smoked Stanford, wedges of sharp Prince Albert Royal, soft chunks of creamy Foxenburg and a delightfully oozy Petit Brie are all the samples of the local artisanal delights you'll fast acquire a taste for at the Say Cheese Fair. The second ever, it's set to take place at the Italian Club of Cape Town in Rugby on Saturday 30 September and Sunday, 1 October.



A scene from last year's Say Cheese Fair.

The media launch for the fair took place on Thursday, 27 July – also at the Italian Club. Met with cheery yellow and blue bunting (not a typo, this definitely not for the banters) – our long table was laden with assorted samples of cheese, bowls of nuts, a variety of crackers and all manner of cheesy accompaniment.

Once seated we were lead through a cheese tasting led by Graham Sutherland, technical application specialist who has been in the industry for 22 years, makes cheese himself and judges at the Dairy Championships each year so certainly knows his stuff. Luckily the sampling was light as we had many bigger plates to follow.

The smelly, runny delicious business of cheese

Sutherland expertly guided us from the softest and freshest option, moving with the increasing flavour intensity to the stronger, sharper, harder cheeses. And so our sample started with the Foxenberg chèvre, a fresh goats' cheese, with Sutherland sharing that these cheeses spoil quickly and are lower in fat than those made with cow's milk – you're looking at 14% for goat's cheese and anything up to 30% for the bovine version, so goat's milk is a good choice for the health conscious as well as those with lactose issues, as it's easier to digest.

“ Fast fact: the male goats presence near female goats can have a negative affect on the flavour of the milk / cheese

@saycheesefair— Sam Linsell 🍀🍀🍀 (@drizzleanddip) [July 27, 2017](#) ”

Next was the petit France Brie – the runnier it is the older it is, as there's been more time for enzyme breakdown – that's why you often pick up a strong ammonia scent in maturation rooms. We also sampled a wedge of oak-smoked Stanford, which is a semi-hard cheese with strong smoky scent that's quite reminiscent of bacon. Last on our plates was the Prince Albert Royal, also a semi-hard cheese and the only one made of raw milk as opposed to pasteurised. It was sharp and delicious, just the thing to down with a glass of cab sav. Raw milk cheese are rare as there are risks regarding hygiene and potentially harmful bacteria that could have disastrous consequences for production companies.

Sutherland also pointed out that cheese enjoyment is a very personal thing. That may be so, but I was in my element savouring the hot dishes that flowed from the Italian Club's kitchen next, as were event organisers Kiki Ciman-Frauenknecht and Elize Nel of A3 Technologies, and the stars of our chef's table Zola Nene, also a food stylist and TV personality on SABC3's *Expresso* and travel and food photographer Sam Linsell of *Drizzle & Dip*. These ranged from fresh, lemon-zesty balls of mozzarella *bocconcini*; a tangy broccoli-and-blue cheese soup; crisply crumbed, oozy-on-the-inside *Arancini di mozzarella* in sweet, creamy hot tomato sauce; baked Brie topped with crisp bacon streaks and sprigs of thyme; thin-based feta-beetroot-rocket pizza drizzled with balsamic; mounds of soft gnocchi in a strong cheesy sauce with hazelnut bits; and a huge bowl of salad for the table, as flavourful and crunchy as you'd expect from a mix of halloumi, chick peas, pomegranate gems and thick slices of avo. Yummo!

“ Hello cheesy goodness 🍀🍀🍀 @saycheesefair [pic.twitter.com/4A966p1tQp](#)— Zola Nene (@zola_nene) [July 27, 2017](#) ”

You can expect cheese-making demos, tasting, pairings and displays from the fair, as well as roughly 45 cheese producers offering their wares along with complimentary breads, olives, preserves, wines and more. Well worth a visit if the imported cheese are just proving too expensive for your palate and pocket these days. Tickets will be available at the door at R90 per adult, R55 for pensioners and scholars aged 12 to 18, while those under the age of 12 enter free.

For further information, email Ciman-Frauenknecht at saycheesefair@gmail.com, phone Elize Nel on 072 795 4214 or visit Say Cheese Fair on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh_Andrews.

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