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Il piacere di vivere e viaggiare la campagna

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SUPERB WHEN INEBRIATED

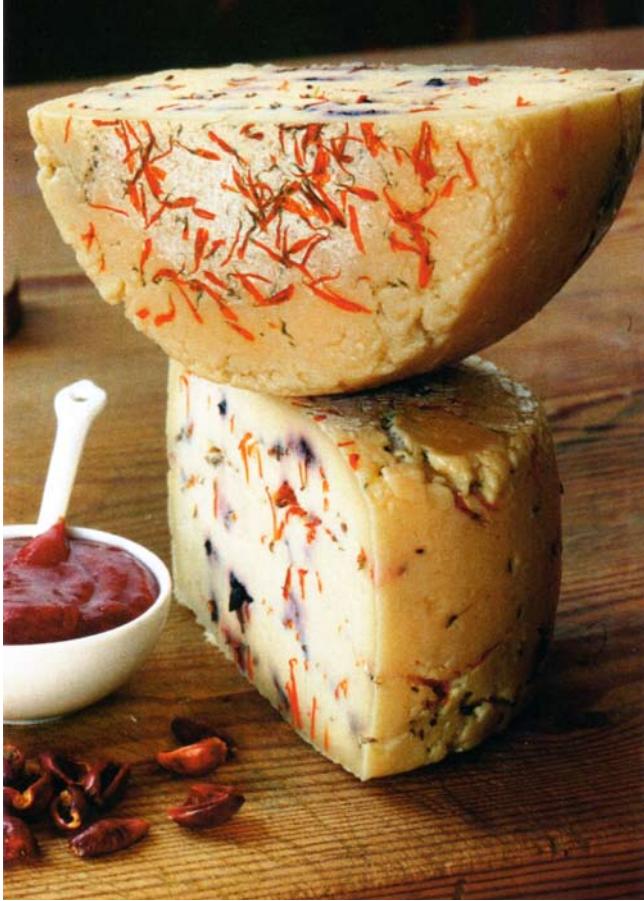
They revive mediaeval traditions and can be strong and aromatic or mild in flavour. Produced at a traditional dairy in the Treviso area, these cheeses are taking London and New York by storm.

BY ANGELA SCIPIONI • PHOTOS BY ADRIANO BACCHELLA

Cutting the rind of a quality cheese, admiring its pure interior and allowing its flavours to explode onto the palate is rather like settling down to begin a classic novel. One endeavours to identify the elements that led to the end result, wondering what intricacies it took to achieve such harmony and what hand managed to pen the tale of such an original story. If one closes one's eyes to meditate on this, it is possible to imagine the principal elements that shaped the flavour, tradition and nature of this wholesome, ever-evolving product. It is thus that the flavours of the pastures of the Venetian plain, locked into the exquisite products of the Perenzin dairy in San Pietro di Feletto in the Treviso area, are discernable. The age-old artisanal dairy tradition of the Perenzin family, run with dedication by the fourth generation - Emanuela Perenzin and husband Carlo Piccoli - is expressed through the complex subtleties of nature, which embrace the cheese from its origins of pure certified organic goat's milk and cow's milk. Now Perenzin products are also to be found in the gourmet section at Harrods in London and at events like Fancy Food in New York. "Our products are appreciated even more abroad, where consumers are very particular when it comes to quality," comments Emanuela. Castel cheese is quite literally a taste of history. A liberal interpretation of a medieval cheese and made from raw milk, it is delicious by itself, but its flavour is truly heightened by a drizzle of chestnut honey accompanied by a glass of raisin wine. Montasio PDO, possibly the Veneto region's most famous cheese, delights the palates of both those who appreciate the mild flavour of a fresh cheese and those who prefer more aromatic, distinct flavours. When fresh, its paste is white and compact and features characteristic evenly distributed eyes of uniform size. A longer period of aging will result in a grainy, crum-



Top, from the left: Castel cheese, aka "Medievale", and a 1936 milk ration book. Above: Emanuela Perenzin's husband Carlo Piccoli of the Perenzin dairy. Left: must-imbued caciotta cheeses, raisin must-imbued "panarelli" cheeses and goat's milk caciotta cheeses wrapped in hay or coated in peppercorns.



A TASTE OF THE COUNTRY

Left: calendula flower cheese with wild rose coulis. Below: Montasio wheels during the ripening phase. Below, left: pears as an accompaniment to aged Montasio cheese.



bly texture. Astounding flavours can be created where tradition is combined with imagination. After an initial period of ripening, young caciotta cheeses part ways: some are washed, then gently rubbed with extravirgin olive oil from the Ligurian region and rolled in crushed black peppercorns. Others are wrapped in hay or fragrant walnut leaves and left to age further. “Ciock” cheese, on the other hand, comes from the age-old custom of steeping the cheese wheels in large vats of fermenting must. Thus steeped in the must of local Novello, Cabernet, Marzemino or Prosecco grapes, the cheese acquires a literally inebriating flavour. Yet another special flavour is achieved when the must of the choice Traminer grape is used. As is the case for the whole of production, even the choice of must is made according to the basic rule not to confuse the palate: that of never mixing different types of grape. Served in an autumn symphony with chestnut, radicchio and pomegranate, this must-imbued cheese is extolled by the Da Andreetta restaurant in Rolle, where the menu of Triveneto cheeses offers no less than thirty different types. Also, at the beginning of February the local cheeses will be used in creative cuisine in a special evening at the Da Gigetto restaurant in Miane, where the dessert menu will be offering crème brûlée made with Castel cheese.

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- Ristorante (bed&breakfast) Da Andreetta Terrazza di Rolle**, via Enotria 7, Cison di Valmarino (Tv), loc. Rolle, tel. +39 0438 85761.
- Ristorante Da Gigetto**, via Alcide De Gasperi 4, Miane (Tv), tel. +39 0438/960020.