

Good Stuff NW

FEATURING STUFF THAT IS GOOD IN THE NW

ABOUT ME



KAB

I'm passionate about writing and design and I love living in Oregon with its combination of

urban style and down-home friendliness.

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WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 15, 2007

Keeping That Cheesy Goodness



How often have you spent a fair amount of money on a nice piece of cheese and had it dry out or get moldy in the fridge? Or bought some from the supermarket, brought it home and it has that distinct *je ne sais quoi* of the plastic it was wrapped in? In doing research for my article for

[Culinate.com](#) on buying cheese, I learned some interesting tidbits about storing cheese and keeping it in peak condition once you get it home.

I mean, if you're spending \$8 to \$20 a lb. for cheese, you want it to taste like the place it came from, with the fragrance and flavor of fresh milk, grass or the sea. So, assuming you've bought your cheese from a reputable cheese-monger or supermarket cheese department and it's still at the height of its flavor and perfection, what should you do? If it's wrapped in plastic, unwrap it quickly. Cheese contains living organisms that need to breathe, and plastic cuts off the air supply. Plastic can also trap gases and moisture next to the surface of the cheese, causing off-tastes of ammonia and other unpleasantnesses.

If your cheese is securely wrapped in cheese paper, it's fine. This paper is made of two layers, a thin breathable layer that wicks moisture away from the surface of the cheese, and a waxy paper outer layer that keeps the moisture from escaping and drying it out. A Portland company, [Formaticum](#), has come out with a line of French cheese paper printed with a map of the U.S. and founder Mark Goldman's favorite artisan cheeses (one of which is [Twig Farm](#) in Vermont). His packages of 15 papers are now available at [Foster & Dobbs](#), [Steve's Cheese](#) and New Seasons markets and come with 15 handy sticky labels, all for around \$7.50.



The other option for wrapping, according to the experts I spoke with, is simply wrapping it tightly in wax paper and keeping that in an airtight, Tupperware-type plastic container in the fridge. The other advice I got, which makes sense if you think about it, is to only buy as much as you

VACATION PIX



Sand dollar at Gleneden Beach.

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EVENTS/CLASSES

Mar. 5: Sustainability Brown Bags: Green Remodel. Noon-1 pm; free. Central Library, US Bank Room, 801 SW 10th Ave. 503-988-5123.

Mar. 8: Wild in the City: Columbia Slough Restoration Paddle. 9 am-12 pm; free with preregistration. 503-292-6855 x116.

Mar. 9: Bake Sale to benefit Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. Noon; payment by cash or check only. Foster & Dobbs Authentic Foods, 2518 NE 15th Ave. 503-284-1157.

Mar. 9: Creating Privacy in the Garden. 1-2 pm; free. Portland Nursery, 5050 SE Stark St. 503-231-5050.

Mar. 10: Your Brain on Love, a benefit for OPB. 6 pm; \$60, tickets available online. Uptown Billiards, 120 NW 23rd Ave. 503-244-9900.

Mar. 11: Wild in the City: Oaks Bottom Wildlife Refuge and Springwater Corridor Walk. 8 am-11 am; free with preregistration. 503-292-6855 x116.

Mar. 11: Let's Talk About It: Jewish Literature, Identity and Imagination focusing on "Julius Knipl, Real Estate Photographer: Stories" by Ben Katchor. 6:30-7:30 pm; free with preregistration.

Hollywood Library, 4040 NE Tillamook St. 503-988-5391.

Mar. 11: Bees & Honey with Tom Foster, a 7th generation beekeeper. 7:15 pm; \$20, reservations only. Foster & Dobbs Authentic Foods, 2518 NE 15th Ave. 503-284-1157.

Mar. 12: Sustainability Brown Bags: Composting Made Easy. Noon-1 pm; free. Central Library, US Bank Room, 801 SW 10th Ave. 503-988-5123.

Mar. 13: Portland Cello Project plays at OHSU. 6:30 pm; free.

Mar. 14: Fondue Friday at Foster & Dobbs featuring a pot of fondue, lovely things to dip and a glass of wine. 7:30 pm; \$35, reservations only. Foster & Dobbs Authentic Foods, 2518 NE 15th Ave. 503-284-1157.

Mar. 15: How to Design a Border That Looks Great in All Seasons with Anne Nickerson. 11 am; free. Farmington Gardens, 21815 SW Farmington Rd., Beaverton. 503-649-4568.

Mar. 16: Groundcovers with Meghan Big John-Miller of Little Prince of Oregon. 1-2 pm; free. Portland Nursery, 5050 SE Stark St. 503-231-5050.

Mar. 16: Cooking Class: Bengali Cuisine of Calcutta at Vindalho. 4-7 pm; \$75, includes food, beverage and gratuity. Call for information or to register. Vindalho, 2038 SE Clinton St. 503-467-4550.

Mar. 16: Movie Night at Hotel Deluxe. 6:30 pm; free. Hotel Deluxe, 729 SW 15th Ave. 866-895-2094.

Mar. 19: DIY Cheesemakers meet at Foster & Dobbs to exchange ideas, experiences, resources and maybe even cheese! 7:15 pm; free. Foster & Dobbs Authentic Foods, 2518 NE 15th Ave. 503-284-1157.

Mar. 20: Ellen Lupton, author of "Design It Yourself" and "Thinking with Type" lectures on "Excellence in Craft." 7 pm; free. PNCA Swigert Commons, 1241 NW Johnson St. 503-226-4391

Mar. 20: Tasty, Easy Appetizers at Foster & Dobbs featuring great nibbles to make at home. 7:15 pm; \$20, reservations only. Foster &

need for a few days or, as Tim Daly of Steve's Cheese said, "Buy less more often." That way you're assured your cheese is as fresh as it can be and you'll be happy when you bite into it.

POSTED BY KAB AT 9:11 AM

2 COMMENTS:

Anonymous said...
Kathleen,

In considering cheese storage, it is useful to remember that cheese predates the refrigerator. Refrigerators desiccate food, and also allow flavors to mingle. There are more gentle approaches.

In our experience, a good place to store cheese, fall through spring, is outdoors. Once monsoon season hits, the air is moist, never stale, and the temperature mostly perfect. After all, the PNW winter shares many features with a cave. We keep a table beneath the overhang on the north side of the house. A bowl inverted over the cheese keeps rodents at bay. Root vegetables need similar conditions, ideally placing them where they get some drift from the rain, but not a direct soaking. Sauerkraut is stored there as well, though we move it indoors during cold snaps. Unheated mud rooms should work well. Cheese used to be kept in the pantry under a glass or ceramic dome called a cheese bell.

In New England, cheddar cheese and a myriad of other foods benefitting from cool, moist conditions, were kept in a spring house. Milk and other perishables were stored in a crock or bottle set in the cistern. Cheese was kept on a shelf nearby. The big wheels, about two feet across, were wrapped in cheese cloth and waxed. I suspect wedges were cut from the wheel and then the wound was repaired with some cheese cloth and wax. The wedge would be brought into the house and set under a cheese bell in the pantry. Eric Sloane has some good illustrations of spring houses in his book, *The Age of Barns*.

Anthony

7:28 PM

kab said...

Wow, Anthony, what a wealth of information! It's a good reminder to us citified folks that there are alternatives to the fridge. In your comment I can smell the wet air, the earth, the cheese and sauerkraut as I walk out the back door and down the wooden stairs. Thanks for that picture and the memory of those smells!

9:39 PM

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LINKS

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