

The Oregonian

Wrap star: Formaticum Cheese Paper

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If you're spending \$8 to \$20 a pound 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, not plastic wrap. And you want a fair chance to finish it before it gets moldy.

The trick to preserving a cheese at its peak is proper storage. If the cheese is wrapped in plastic, remove it right away. 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-flavors like ammonia. As Peter Dixon of Vermont's Dairy Foods Consulting says, "It's like putting your cheese in a body bag; it can't live and breathe any more."

Here to save the day -- and our cheese -- is Portland-based Formaticum's line of French cheese paper. Printed with a map of the United States and founder Mark Goldman's favorite artisan cheeses, the paper is made of two layers -- a thin breathable layer that wicks moisture away from the surface of the cheese, and a waxy outer layer that keeps the moisture from escaping and letting cheese dry out. Packages of 15 papers are now available at Foster & Dobbs, Steve's Cheese and New Seasons markets, and come with 15 handy sticky labels. The packages cost around \$7.50.

-- Kathleen Bauer