

Cheese Cultures

Transforming American Tastes and Traditions

HOUSED IN AN OLD RAIL DEPOT, the National Historic Cheesemaking Center in Monroe, Wisconsin, displays early industrial cheesemaking artifacts, including huge copper kettles used in Emmenthaler production.¹ Just north of the Illinois border, Green County used to be the Swiss Cheese capital of the United States. Its earliest cheese factory opened in 1868; by 1910 more than two hundred factories producing Swiss-style and Limburger cheeses accounted for the county's relative prosperity.² Only in the 1950s were copper kettles replaced by rectangular stainless-steel vats and generic "Swiss" cheeses molded in forty-pound blocks better suited to slicing machines than unwieldy wheels of Emmenthaler. Today, just eleven cheese factories remain in operation in Green County, including the sole domestic producer of Limburger; still, Monroe's high school football team goes by the name "The Cheesemakers."

I visited the cheesemaking museum in July 2008 while interviewing area cheesemakers as part of multi-sited ethnographic research into the contemporary artisan cheese movement in the United States. A docent, a gray-haired woman named Janet, described to me how fifty years ago her husband, who had apprenticed with a Swiss cheesemaker, would reach into a copper kettle and gather a handful of curd in his hand, squeeze, and "flake it off" with his thumb; from the curd's "grip" he would determine when it was time to pull up the curd in a cheesecloth to drain it from the whey. At one factory her husband tended six kettles simultaneously, each yielding one 180-pound wheel of Emmenthaler. Sometimes, Janet explained, the first kettle he got going might not be ready to "dip" after fifteen minutes, but the second one would be; he would know from examining the curd. "There was an art to it," she said. His coworkers, "who weren't taught by the Swiss," just went by the clock; after fifteen minutes they would pull out the curd, regardless of its state of readiness. Janet was proud of her husband's specialist know-how. She pointed to a photograph of him gathering up curd using the strenuously manual technique of "dipping" a square

of cheesecloth beneath a hot (120°F) mass of cooked curd, holding two corners in his teeth to keep the cloth from falling in and hooking his feet around the cross-bar of a metal T that resembled a tire iron sunk into a block of concrete.

The photo fascinated me, in part because it depicted almost precisely a technique I had seen demonstrated the previous summer in Vermont (see photo on p.37). John Putnam, a former big-city commercial litigator, learned to "dip" curd in 2002 from a French consultant he and his wife and business partner, Janine, had brought over to their

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newly licensed creamery, located on a farm they purchased in 1986, about fifteen miles from where John grew up. After just a few weeks working alongside the European craftsman, the Putnams launched the Alpine-style cheese they named Tarentaise. Putnam's eight-hundred-liter copper vat (much smaller than the one used by Janet's husband) was custom made for them in Switzerland.

Another exhibit at the Historic Cheesemaking Center featured a wooden stand holding glass test tubes. A sign explained how cheesemakers, to evaluate milk quality, would



hold a sample of each day's milk in a test tube at room temperature in order to see how the curd set up (today, large manufacturers house their own labs to run scientific tests, something artisan producers cannot afford). Again, I had recently seen this practice demonstrated by an experienced Vermont cheesemaker, who told me he had only recently learned the "trick" from a visiting French colleague. I realized that much of Vermont's artisan present, borrowed directly from Europe, could actually be found in Wisconsin's past.

How It All Began

Contemporary interest in producing artisan cheese arose in the early 1980s as an offshoot of the back-to-the-land movement. Since 2000 the number of artisan cheesemakers in the United States has more than doubled.³ Yet, as the Historic Cheesemaking Center demonstrates, low-tech cheese did not suddenly appear on the American landscape in the late twentieth century. Prior to industrialization, cheese was made by American farmwomen in their kitchens and, later, in dedicated cheese houses, for both home use and commercial trade.⁴ Even after cheesemaking moved from farmhouse to factory in the second half of

the nineteenth century, for decades men like Janet's husband plied their craft over open kettles and in moldy aging rooms—using artisan techniques and sensibilities to coax the desired fermentation of unpasteurized milk. Alongside the history of American industrialization lies a submerged yet continuous history of small-batch, hands-on, artisan manufacture of European-derived cheeses, including Cheddar, Emmentaler, Limburger, and even—in Marin County, California, beginning in 1904—Camembert. And yet, across the United States, few people in the cheese world speak of a domestic "tradition" of artisan cheesemaking.

Numerous commentators, such as Slow Food founder Carlo Petrini, have heralded the rise of artisan cheesemaking in the United States, calling it a "renaissance."⁵ But strikingly little attention is paid to artisan cheesemaking's origins in this country. What can we learn of the present and future of "American cheese," and of artisan food economies more generally, by considering the old regional cheese factories that resisted automation and are still operating after eighty or even one hundred years? It is neither surprising nor misguided (for reasons noted below) that today's artisan cheesemakers should tend to look to contemporary



Europe for inspiration and artisan technique, rather than to America's own preindustrial past. Continuities in fabrication methods shared by pre- and post-industrial artisan creameries have been obscured by changes in the organization and significance of artisan production over the last one hundred years: what artisan cheesemaking means today, economically and culturally, is not the same as in Janet's husband's time. Making cheese by hand has morphed from chore to occupation to vocation; from economic trade to expressive endeavor; from craft to art. My research reveals that the disconnect between the current artisan movement and America's enduring cheesemaking tradition reproduces class hierarchies even as it reflects growing equity in gendered occupational opportunities.

A chapter title of cheesemonger Liz Thorpe's 2009 *Cheese Chronicles*—"When Did 'Factory' Become a Dirty Word?"—illustrates the disconnect between the "birth" and the "rebirth" of commercial artisan cheese. Addressing the "when" more than the "why" of how *factory* became a dirty word, Thorpe notes, "It shouldn't really surprise me that when new kinds of cheese and new models of production began to sprout up in the early 1980s, they defined themselves in opposition to the old factory style. Add to this

Above: John Putnam "dipping" curd for Thistle Hill Farm Tarentaise in North Pomfret, Vermont, July 3, 2007. Left: A copper-lined kettle used in Emmentaler production in late nineteenth-century Wisconsin, exhibited at the Historic Cheesemaking Center in Monroe. In the exhibit, curd is shown draining over the kettle after having been "dipped" by a cheesemaker using a length of cheesecloth.

ABOVE: PHOTOGRAPH BY HEATHER PAXSON © 2007. LEFT: PHOTOGRAPH BY HEATHER PAXSON © 2008.

the push toward a bigger, faster, cheaper cheese commodity, and the regional cheese factory of twentieth-century America developed a pretty bad rap pretty quickly."⁶ Bad rap among whom? Presumably among high-end retailers (Thorpe is vice-president of the Manhattan cheese shop Murray's Cheese) and their regular customers accustomed to the European-style table cheeses emulated by the new wave of domestic producers. After confessing that she had once been one of "the sophisticates" who "liked to mock" the waxed Goudas and Pepper Jack turned out by small factories, Thorpe reports earnestly on a tasting tour of Wisconsin artisan factory cheeses, including the two I discuss in this article. As she recognizes, today's artisans and yesterday's tradesmen are in fact connected by shared skills and techniques, artisan sensibility, and even, in a couple of cases, familial kinship.

This article explores the tension between the relative continuity of artisan practice and the changing cultural evaluation of that practice. I consider how two seasoned Wisconsin cheesemakers, managers of small facilities that have operated for more than eighty years—known locally and without derision as “cheese factories”—respond to the new generation of cheesemakers and the tendency among neo-artisans to look to Europe, rather than to them, for technique and inspiration. The first cheesemaker responds with good-humored criticism of the American inclination to romanticize European production as quaintly “traditional,” when the reality is that European cheesemaking has also industrialized. The second responds by accommodating, even capitalizing upon the new domestic artisan market. Taken together, these producers’ stories reveal the role of *taste* in establishing the artisan identity not only of a cheese but also of a cheesemaker. Bringing artisan producers of Brick and Limburger into the frame of America’s cheese “renaissance” upends blanket assumptions about the elite status of artisan foods and their makers. American artisan cheesemakers turn out to be as varied as the cheeses they produce.⁷

European Allure

In 1979 and 1980 two young American women of European stock traveled, independently, from California and Vermont to France, where each learned to make fresh and ripened goat’s milk cheeses; on opposite coasts they founded Laura Chenel Chèvre (1979) and Vermont Butter & Cheese Company (1984). In the middle of the country Anne Topham had an epiphany after tasting a ripened goat cheese flown in to Madison, Wisconsin, by a friend’s French mother; thirty years later Anne is still trying to replicate the taste of that cheese in her tiny farmstead creamery. Sheep’s milk cheeses also appeared in the United States in the 1980s. Vermont Shepherd was born after a young couple from the Green Mountain State traveled to the Pyrénées to learn from Basque shepherds how to transform into a viable product the milk of the family’s sheep, raised for decades as pets but also for their meat and wool.

One reason why Americans wanting to create cheese from the milk of goats and sheep have traveled to Europe is that, owing to American immigration history, domestic expertise has been centered in the production of aged cow’s milk cheeses. The descendents of Puritans from East Anglia who nearly four hundred years ago brought dairy cows and methods of handcrafting Cheddar-style hard cheeses to the New England colonies fanned westward. In the nineteenth century they were joined by Dutch, Swiss,

German, and Italian immigrants with cow’s milk cheese cultures of their own. Early, hybridized American originals include Colby, Brick, Teleme, and Monterey Jack—all made from cow’s milk. As a result, there has been no trans-generational American tradition of commercial goat or sheep’s milk cheese production. “Twenty-six years ago,” one experienced goat cheesemaker told me, “there wasn’t anyone to learn from. You *had* to go to Europe.” Now the latest wave of pilgrims—former lawyers and dotcom executives who bought cows and traveled to Switzerland and the Netherlands in the 1990s and 2000s to custom-order old-style copper kettles—never realized they might have found them closer to home, in Wisconsin, where they were used until the 1980s.

There are sound pragmatic reasons for studying cheesemaking in Europe. For one thing, many Americans who have recently decided to become commercial cheesemakers were inspired to do so while traveling or living in Europe, so it makes sense for them to pursue social networks developed abroad. Also, most U.S. artisan factories cannot advise specifically on making cheese from raw (unpasteurized) milk, as pasteurization became the industry norm in the 1930s to ensure safety when pooling milk from multiple dairy farms. As one Wisconsin farmstead producer explained, when working with raw milk “you want to make your cheese when the milk is very fresh” to prevent the exponential growth of bacteria that could contribute off flavors (or pathogens) to a cheese. “In the cheese factory,” he continued, the milk “is going to be two days old when it leaves the farm, and another day at the cheese factory, or more, particularly if they buy milk from all over the state. So they really *have* to pasteurize it, for their own protection.”

Beyond such practical considerations are more symbolic influences on the continued turn to Europe. One indicator comes from the American Cheese Society (ACS), a nonprofit organization of small-scale cheese producers, retailers, distributors, food writers, and enthusiasts founded in 1983 by a Cornell dairy scientist. With blue ribbons won at their annual competition translating into media attention and sales, the ACS has been instrumental in updating popular understandings of “American cheese.”⁸ In the late 1990s the ACS offered the following definition:

The word “artisan” or “artisanal” implies that a cheese is produced primarily by hand, in small batches, with particular attention paid to the tradition of the cheesemaker’s art, and thus using as little mechanization as possible in the production of the cheese.⁹

It is telling that the American Cheese Society defines *artisanal* in terms of the cheesemaker's *art*—rather than *craft* or even *skill*—as art gained cultural and philosophical status at the same time that craft was devalued through its association with manual (if skilled) labor.¹⁰ From classical Athens through the Middle Ages, *techne*, the practical knowledge employed in the making of some object, encompassed what was only later disaggregated as art and craft.¹¹ In the eighteenth century, under the influence of Kantian aesthetics and the stirrings of industrialization, *art* and *craft*, *artist* and *artisan* were categorically distinguished, with the latter, Raymond Williams writes, “being specialized to ‘skilled manual worker’ without ‘intellectual’ or ‘imaginative’ or ‘creative’ purposes.”¹² As a keyword *art*, Williams might say, is more *cultured* than *craft*—in the sense of being not only cultivated or trained, but also civilized.

In interviews cheesemakers referred frequently to the “art” and “science” of their technique, only rarely employing the word “craft.” One reason, I suggest, is that art, being more “cultured,” offers a stronger antithesis than craft to industrial fabrication. In American folk theory “culture” can refer to quaint rituals and strange foods that mark recent immigrants as Other and make foreign travel enticingly exotic. But people speak, too, of culture with an implicit capital C to gloss an aesthetic refinement or elevated cultural capital; in other words, *taste*. From the melting pot onward, the ideology and imagery of American civic nationalism has forwarded a modernist notion of cultural dilution, depicting American progress as the rational overcoming of blind adherence to tradition; neither culture nor Culture offers a unifying trope for national narratives of the United States. Instead, for over a hundred years, industrialization has been the dominant form of innovation in American cheesemaking, as in American life overall, to the point that “American cheese” has popularly and legally come to name pasteurized process cheese sold in plastic-encased blocks or individually wrapped slices.¹³ Industrial standardization is both symptom and symbol of the American modernist narrative; it is little wonder that “American cheese” is so bland.

The necessary corollary of America's modern self-image is a counter-image of Europe as a bastion of cultural tradition. On high-end restaurant menus and in specialty foods catalogues, European-style cheeses (including those domestically produced) are presented as tasteful, even tastier than anything as clearly American as Colby-Jack. As a Vermont cheesemaker said, critically, in this country “we tend to think because somebody comes from France, whatever they did in France they have a better opinion of cheese than

we do, and they know a lot more about it, which doesn't necessarily hold true.” Certainly, many excellent cheeses are made in Europe—but so, too, are boring commodity cheeses. Yet foil-wrapped, processed wedges of Laughing Cow are never metonymically “French cheese.”

One reason, then, for educated newcomers to the industry to turn to Europe for “real” cheesemaking technique is an American desire to consume Europe's invented traditions, including the very notion of Europe as the ur-repository of Culture. According to Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, invented traditions “are responses to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations, or which establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition. It is the contrast between the constant change and innovation of the modern world and the attempt to structure at least some parts of social life within it as unchanging and invariant, that makes the ‘invention of tradition’ so interesting for historians of the past two centuries.”¹⁴ Invention of tradition is a useful concept when discussing Europe, where “the traditional” and “the modern” continue to be potent, mutually constitutive tropes through which people stake moral claims of belonging, authenticity, and progress.¹⁵ Well-cultured (and state-subsidized) classics such as Camembert, Vacherin, Emmentaler, Comté, and Taleggio are readily analyzed as embodying and preserving “invented traditions,” including peasant histories glorified in nationalist rhetoric. In France and Italy, what “traditional” food will look like in the future is a contentious matter of national policy, to be worked out through the legal instruments of name-controlled food labels (such as AOC and DOC).¹⁶

In the United States, where entrepreneurial innovation is celebrated and farmers of the past have been hailed not as peasants but as pioneers, the ideological tale of American artisanal cheese is better characterized as a “tradition of invention.” Change, rather than continuity, is marked as “traditionally” American; what I am calling a “tradition of invention” is, of course, invented as such. An illustrative example was narrated to me by Jim Boyce, who in 1998 purchased the Marin French Cheese Company from the descendants of Jefferson Thompson. In 1865 Thompson had founded the company to supply European stevedores sailing into the San Francisco Bay with fresh disks of “Breakfast Cheese,” which were sold on the countertops of harbor saloons. In an interview Boyce explicitly likened the present boom in cheesemaking to the turn of the twentieth century. Both eras, he said, have been periods “of innovation in local cheese.” Similarly, Allison Hooper, cofounder of the twenty-four-year-old Vermont Butter & Cheese Company, writes of American cheesemakers, “Without the burden of



tradition we are free to be innovative, take risks.”¹⁷ Lacking Europe’s weighty traditions, in other words, turns out to be a virtue rather than a deficit because it opens up possibilities for experimentation.

Although today’s cheesemakers may not be burdened by the regulatory demands of government-protected “traditional” recipes, neither are they starting from scratch, as the ACS definition of artisan cheesemaking makes clear. One recently minted Wisconsin cheesemaker has added value to his German-American wife’s family’s 160-year old dairy farm by making Italian-style aged cheeses using recipes supplied by a consultant from New Zealand. He acknowledges that for “the technical part of making cheese...we’re grabbing, stealing, borrowing” from European models. Just as Europe’s invented traditions may not be as old as some imagine, America’s tradition of invention may not be as innovative as some would have it. Indeed, the pioneering ideal and quest for newness that is the hallmark of both industrialization and today’s rediscovered artisan manufacture may contribute to the collective neglect of an ongoing tradition of domestic artisan cheesemaking.

Above: “Ditching” curd to drain off whey. *The Kraft-Phenix Cheese Corporation, 1933.*

INDUSTRIAL LIFE PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION. BAKER LIBRARY HISTORICAL COLLECTIONS. HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL (OLVWORK355013)

The Gender and Class of Art and Craft

What cheesemakers do in today’s artisan creameries and aging rooms is not so very different from the methods of their forebears. In early industrial and contemporary eras, artisan practice is recognizable in a cheesemaker’s tacit application of a synaesthetic sensibility in evaluating the variable condition of milk and curd through such means as testing the curd’s “grip,” a state of readiness that antebellum armwomen judged by a telltale “squeak between the teeth” and Janet’s husband assessed with the motion of his thumb.¹⁸ Many of the artisan techniques and technologies that the cheesemakers I interviewed said would ensure a product superior to commodity cheese—e.g., gravity-fed cheese vats, which obviate the industrial method of pumping said to break up the delicate chemistry of nonhomogenized milk—would have been found in nineteenth-century cheese factories.¹⁹ Although it may be difficult to imagine

today, particularly for those to whom the phrase “artisan factory” sounds like an oxymoron, early cheese factories were staffed by skilled craftsmen who applied techniques and sensibilities learned through apprenticeship. Not until the mid-twentieth century was cheese production scaled up and industrialized to the point that factory laborers were effectively demoted to being mere machine operatives.²⁰

What is different about these two eras is the way producers and consumers think and talk about such active engagement. Initially a farm chore for which pioneer wives were responsible, making cheese by hand in the United States was transformed into a blue-collar job and then, post-industrialization, into a vocation. It has moved from being an economic trade, a rural alternative to farming, to a lifestyle choice pursued frequently, though not exclusively, by professionals escaping office-bound careers and suburban backgrounds. Different social relations of production have organized factory and farmstead cheesemaking. A gendered class difference between blue-and white-collar labor may also obscure today’s connoisseurs’ and artisans’ ability to recognize the “tradition of the cheesemaker’s art” in early American artisan factories.

Although nineteenth-century cheese factories were neither mechanized nor automated, and early cheese factory workers “possessed the same skills that their home-cheesemaking counterparts had wielded—the work was not divided into smaller, less skilled tasks,”²¹ the factories were clearly organized through a capitalist mode of production. Those who made cheese from raw milk using manual technology in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century factories were then, and are now, considered laborers or tradesmen—artisans but not artists—understood to work more with their bodies than with their minds. They worked for hourly wages, selling their labor power to the factory owner, who was often also the manager. Calling those who made cheese using artisan methods *laborers* further reflects the masculinization of cheesemaking that accompanied its centralization. Anne Topham, a pioneering goat cheesemaker, told me, “Julie Hook won the World Championship of Cheese with a Colby right before we started [in 1984]. But generally speaking, the women were not the cheesemakers in the plants.” In the early 1990s Wisconsin’s Center for Dairy Research and the state’s Milk Marketing Board established a rigorous Master Cheesemaker certification program to recognize the expertise of its veteran factory producers; of the forty-nine cheesemakers to have obtained Master certification by 2009, just one, Carie Wagner, is a woman.

The gender transition of professionalization contributed to an image makeover for cheesemaking, transforming it

from a farm-based craft not immediately into an art, but to a modern science. Factories, after all, were exemplary sites of nineteenth-century scientific rationalization and modern efficiency. Sally McMurry quotes a newspaperman reporting on an 1863 visit to a New York state cheese factory, “it does one good to witness the difference between the order and cleanliness of this model institute, and the suspicious and slatternly surroundings of some home dairies,” reminding us that as an epithet *slatternly* (unkempt, “dirty through habitual neglect”²²) is not gender neutral. The masculinization of cheesemaking, McMurry continues, was further significant in bolstering the masculinity of male cheesemakers as they took over what had been a predominantly feminine enterprise. Again, these men were laborers who learned their skill through apprenticeship, followed procedures approved by management (increasingly as directed by scientific expertise), and felt kinship with tradesmen in nonagricultural fields.

Times have changed. Julie Hook, whose Colby won the World Championship of Cheese, owns and operates Hook’s Cheese with her husband, Tony. Their spousal business model, rare indeed when the Hooks started in 1976, is becoming the norm. To speak of “artisan cheesemakers” in the United States today, as suggested by a nationwide survey I conducted in early 2009, is overwhelmingly to refer to small, owner-operated, family businesses.²³ Of 177 artisan cheesemaking businesses surveyed, 64 percent are family owned and operated and 57 percent produced less than twelve thousand pounds of cheese in 2008. Forty percent of these cheesemaking businesses comprise couples or individuals who hire no outside employees, while an additional 32 percent employ fewer than six persons, including part-time and seasonal farm labor. As home-based craftspeople, husband-wife teams might superficially resemble antebellum farmstead producers: “Farm families owned the land and their tools; they commanded specialized skills and controlled the work process from start to finish. No division and devaluation of labor was occurring here.”²⁴ Today, however, men are nearly as likely as women to assume cheesemaking duty, and a notable few farmstead couples are gay men and lesbians. “Artisan factories” modeled on the late-nineteenth-century model of acquiring milk from area dairy patrons and employing upwards of a couple dozen people working curd in elongated open vats continue to produce high-quality blocks of familiar Cheddar, Colby, Brick, Monterey Jack, and Limburger, but they no longer represent the most common mode of artisan production in this country.

Compared with one hundred years ago, the people acquiring artisan skills and developing cheesemaking

knowledge come from a different socioeconomic world. Because their work-related identities are differently formed, today's artisans do not generally perceive a kinship with previous craft producers. Artisan cheesemakers today are likely to have college degrees (69 percent of my survey respondents) and, often, former professional careers. For these neo-artisans, cheesemaking is not a job like any other for which one receives a paycheck, nor is it a family business one falls into. It is a chosen way of life. Today's new producers are passionate about what they do and why they do it, including the rural, manually engaged, productive lifestyle it enables.²⁵ For them, the perceived differences in the experience of working in a factory versus a farmstead setting may overshadow any commonalities shared in the crafting of cheese, such as evaluating the "grip" of the curd or perfecting the technique of hand-waxing fresh wheels.

When Marjorie Susman and Marian Pollack started Orb Weaver Farm in central Vermont in 1982, they taught themselves to fashion cheese from the milk of their Jersey cows. "We just started making mistakes in our kitchen, feeding it to the dogs," they told me in an interview. "We never traveled to Europe; we haven't been, you know. And we didn't go to any other cheesemakers, because there *weren't* any." These women convey a strong sense of having set out on their own. Still, an hour-and-fifty-minute drive south of Orb Weaver Farm, in Mount Holly, Vermont, the Crowley Cheese Factory has been putting out Crowley Cheese "in the same manner, from the same recipe"—developed in the Crowley family's kitchen—since 1824.²⁶ In operation the factory is virtually silent; no motorized machines help to make Crowley from raw milk and calf rennet. To an average consumer, Crowley and Orb Weaver cheeses might resemble one another—both are mild, creamy wheels of hand-waxed cow's milk cheese that (according to both Web sites) make a great macaroni and cheese. A true "American Original," Crowley was classified by the Food and Drug Administration as a "Colby" in the early twentieth century, despite the fact that the Crowley family had been making the cheese for sixty years before "Colby" was even invented in the Wisconsin town for which it was named. Describing Orb Weaver cheese, Marjorie said to me: "Well, it's our own recipe, so somewhere in between a Havarti and a Colby. I don't know if that's really true, but somebody once said that and I thought, 'Oh, okay. That works!'" In a follow-up e-mail I asked Marjorie whether they had visited Crowley early on. It turns out they had, a few years before launching Orb Weaver. Marjorie remembers extensive wooden shelving in the cheese room and admits that although "it took some time to remember it...I think

we took away a good amount of knowledge from them." Marjorie and Marian know a number of cheesemakers across the state, but those they keep up with regularly tend to be farmstead producers like themselves. Crowley's "factory" operation, staffed by hourly workers and using milk pooled from multiple dairy farms, feels categorically different from two women milking their six cows before breakfast and working together in careful choreography to fashion wheels of cheese following a method they developed themselves.

Whether tending dairy animals and making farmstead cheese or buying milk from nearby farms to transform through craft methods in independent creameries, the new owner-operators develop original product lines by tinkering with basic recipes and bestowing novel names on their resulting cheeses to develop a brand. For instance, use goat's milk rather than cow's in a Gouda recipe, wash it with a local microbrew beer, and call the cheese Poundhopper (Tumalo Farms of Oregon). Or start with a Havarti recipe but blend sheep and cow's milk to come up with Timberdoodle (Woodcock Farm in Vermont). These award-winning cheeses exemplify the kind of innovation new artisans in this country, unfettered by any specific "tradition of the cheesemaker's art," are up to.

The American ideological tradition of invention, not unlike European inventions of tradition, is being consolidated into a source of cultural capital by which newly minted cheeses, however modeled on European classics such as Gouda and Havarti, are distinguished from Limburger or Brick—even when such "ordinary" cheeses as Crowley are also made by hand in small batches. As Robert Ulin has argued of French wine-growers able to trade on the cultural cachet associated with elite wine-growing regions (compared with their neighbors on less-celebrated areas), the elevated cultural capital of novel, even whimsical cheeses made to be served European-style, on their own—perhaps with an accompaniment of preserved fruit or toasted nuts rather than sandwiched between presliced bread or melted in a casserole—creates distinction not only for the consumers but also for the producers of such commodities.²⁷ A raft of recent consumer-oriented American artisan cheese books featuring professional food photography, producer profiles, recipes, and wine pairings contributes to this culinary economy.²⁸

Limburger and the Tradition of American Modernity

Myron Olson, a congenial, mustachioed man, manages the Chalet Cheese Factory, situated near the Green County



crossroads of N and C and begun in 1885 as a cooperative creamery, the Swiss Cheese Factory, owned by five Green County dairy farmers. Still operating as a co-op, it is now owned by twenty-four farm families. Along with a sibling factory Chalet transforms one hundred thousand pounds of milk a day into smear-ripened Brick, Baby Swiss, deli Swiss, Cheddar, and their signature Limburger. The famously odiferous Limburger was once the dominant cheese produced in Green County. Chalet, which for about seventy years supplied Limburger to Kraft, Inc. (the food giant started out modestly as a Chicago-based cheese wholesaler), is the only remaining Limburger-producing plant in the United States.

Olson recently traveled to Switzerland to serve as a judge in a cheese competition. The visiting judges were taken on a tour of a modern French factory across the border, dispelling any romantic notion of European production happening exclusively in tiny creameries. Olson was floored.

All this cheese is being made, kinda like the Wizard of Oz—“Don’t look behind the curtain! Don’t look behind the curtain!” They’re makin’ all this Brie and Camembert, and it’s all machine. The guy used to sit in the program room not doing a thing until it finally gets to the packaging. In comparison, they took us to a multi-million-dollar museum that they had just built...[W]e went through it and one of the first things was—*[speaks in announcer voice]* “Back in the old days they had these metal racks, and wooden boards, and they’d take the

Above: Joe Widmer’s cheese factory. Joe still uses the same masonry bricks that his grandfather used to weigh blocks of brick cheese.

PHOTOGRAPH BY HEATHER FAXSON © 2008

cheese from the forms, put it in a box of salt, and roll ’em, and put ’em onto the boards.” And I’m standing there thinking, “You know, today’s Friday, and I did that Tuesday!” We’ve still got the salt box, we’ve still got the boards, we still have the rack. And that’s in their museum of “How we *used* to do it.”

From this visit, and from touring factories in Switzerland, Italy, and England, Olson gained renewed appreciation for the “tradition of the cheesemaker’s art” that he had learned from his mentor, Albert Deppeler, a second-generation Swiss Limburger-maker who managed Chalet from 1939 until handing things over to Olson in the early 1990s. Olson is conscious of continuing the tradition by carefully training his cheesemakers.

For nearly one hundred years Chalet’s Limburger has been smeared day in and day out with a continuously renewed ecology of the same *B. linens* cultures (just imagine a sourdough bread that had been made continuously from the same starter for the same period of time). As a form of culture, the bacteria whose cultivation Olson inherited from Deppeler is a metonym for the dynamic tension between change and continuity that constitutes artisan tradition. In 1947 the Kraft brothers, who had been distributing Chalet’s Limburger since the 1920s and who in the

mid-1930s helped to develop a method for producing the cheese from pasteurized milk, invested in capital expansion of the facility.²⁹ Norman Kraft's goal was to build the world's most modern Limburger cheese plant up the hill from the original facility. Kraft, Olson told me,

...brought in new smear boards, they brought in new cultures. They made cheese, took it into the cellars and put their new cultures on it. And the first month all they could make was moldy green Limburger. And [Deppeler] had the idea of goin' back down to the old factory and bringin' up the smear boards that had the bacteria already on the boards. They brought them up and then that was the start of getting it going, because they [the old boards] were inoculated with the combinations of bacteria. So when you put the cheese on it, then they picked up the bacteria and then your smear started to grow. And...then they were able to make Limburger.

The irony is not lost on Olson that, sixty years later, Norman Kraft's "most modern" Limburger factory in the world resembles a museum exhibit in Europe. This story also demonstrates that continuity of artisan know-how is essential even to industrial invention; *techne* and technology are not mutually exclusive.³⁰

Olson's acquired cheese culture is not only bacterial. It is a matter of the tinkering and tacit knowledge that constitutes artisanship. It also is manifest in terms of taste and consumption. Olson grew up on a nearby farm. As a child he refused to eat cheese because his family "got whey from the cheese factory and we made hog slop out of it"—this was his earliest association. "And then I heard this rumor that they use calves' stomachs to make cheese, which is the rennet, and I was like, 'No way, no way!' I mean, I haven't missed too many meals in my life, but there's no way I was gonna eat cheese." When he started working in the cheese plant as a senior in high school, he wondered at coworkers who nibbled the trimmed-off ends of cheeses as they were cutting and packaging, or popped warm curds into their mouths "like candy." Eventually Olson tried it himself—and liked it, gradually moving from milder cheeses up to Limburger.

Aversion to Limburger, a notoriously pungent cheese, is a cliché. I had never seen, smelled, or tasted Limburger before visiting the Chalet plant. It was strong, yes, but no more so than smear-ripened *Époisses* or a really good Taleggio. There was some lingering bitterness but no hint of old socks. I wondered whether the recent excitement surrounding artisan cheeses had rubbed off on Limburger. Olson noted that the expanded palate of increasing numbers of American consumers has likely induced more people to try one of the free samples available at the factory.

Everybody's got their connotation of what Limburger is, their thought in their mind that, "No way am I gonna try it." But if you give that same style cheese a fancy French name, then people will try it. Then it's, "Oh, that's not bad! That's kinda good. It smells, it stinks, but, yeah, it's not bad. I think I'll try another piece." But if you told 'em Limburger, that's it...Two years back we had people asking us, "Could you make Taleggio, could you make this, could you make that?"... We experimented...But I reached the conclusion: I think I'm just gonna stay on Limburger because it's stinky cheese against stinky cheese. I'm not really gonna gain sales [by adding Taleggio]. I'm just gonna do Limburger the best I can, make the best Limburger, and sell Limburger as Limburger. That way there's room for the artisan cheesemakers to make these other ones, which will bring people to Limburger. So it's no use buying extra labels, no use trying to market something. Just keep yourself out there knowing that the public can [be] aware that Limburger, the old time standby that grandma and grandpa used to make, is still available.

In his recent book *American Cheeses* Clark Wolf, a noted food consultant and early manager of San Francisco's Oakville Grocery, good-naturedly recounts visiting Chalet Cheese and suggesting to Myron Olson that he "ought to make up special batches, wrap them in fancy paper, call them 'select,' and sell them for three times the price. He blushed."³¹ But Limburger's last American producer makes no apologies. The cheese, which is sold at the factory store for \$4.77 for a one-pound brick, is not a fancy cheese. It does not belong on an after-dinner tray paired with quince paste. But it is comfortably at home between thick slices of rye, sandwiched with onions and mustard. "Traditional around this area," Olson told me, "is also to put Limburger on top of boiled potatoes." It is a farmer's cheese, a worker's cheese. At Baumgartner's Tavern (est. 1931) in Monroe, Wisconsin, patrons wash down a \$2.95 sandwich made with Myron Olson's Limburger and onions with a pint of locally brewed beer.

Specialty Is the Old/New Artisan

Wisconsin cheesemaker Joe Widmer has a different story to tell. I first met him at a "Meet the Cheesemaker" event at the 2007 meetings of the American Cheese Society in Burlington, Vermont. Sampling a piquant cube of his ten-year aged Cheddar, I asked him to give me the short spiel on his cheese. Widmer's grandfather John emigrated from Switzerland in 1905 and, as a condition of his entry, became an apprentice in a Swiss-owned cheesemaking factory in central Wisconsin. When John Widmer purchased his own factory in 1922, "he was surrounded by Germans," and so

he decided to make smear-ripened Brick. This cheese, also called German Brick, had been developed in Wisconsin around 1875 by John Jossi, another Swiss-born Wisconsin cheesemaker catering to a German-born consumer base.³² Jossi's Brick emerged from tinkering with the recipe for Limburger—itsself a cheese that predates the German nation-state, having been developed in Liège and marketed in the city of Limburg, then part of the Duchy of Limburg and now located in Belgium.

Joe Widmer, who grew up in an apartment above the factory, still makes Brick using his grandfather's techniques: bucketing curd to fill the cheese molds, turning each cheese the first day three times by hand, even pressing the individual blocks of cheese with the same masonry bricks that his grandfather used. Joe is proud of the tradition of American cheesemaking his family represents. In a promotional video shown to factory visitors he says, "All of our products are authentic and traditional, and we make it all the old-fashioned way, which we believe makes it a better cheese." This is not to say that Joe Widmer has refrained from introducing changes since taking over the family business in the early 1990s. He added on rooms for aging and packaging, which allowed him to expand the mail-order business. He opened the factory to tours to promote cheesemaking, and his cheese in particular, as part of Wisconsin's heritage. He commissioned an extensive Web site that retells through archival photos the history of the family business and of Brick cheese. And he introduced a new logo. As he explained when I visited his factory in 2008, there was previously no clear, unifying label tying the various cheeses they produced (Cheddar, Colby, Brick) into a single brand. Widmer has successfully branded the name Widmer's Cheese Cellars and the logo "A Family Tradition of Excellence. Producing Quality Handcrafted Cheese since 1922," embellished with a Swiss cross and his personal signature. This move has helped Widmer place cheese in "more upscale markets, fancier chains of stores [including Whole Foods] and even individual stores." This was his goal: "When you're in this size of business, it's not how much cheese you make, it's how much you make per pound. That tells you if you can stay in business." Annual meetings of the American Cheese Society, an organization Widmer joined around the time he took the company's helm, have been instrumental in cultivating contacts with more upscale distributors and retailers.

Joe Widmer eagerly embraces the new artisan movement as an opportunity to enhance the value—both symbolic and economic—of the same cheese that his father and uncles and grandfather produced. Like Myron Olson, Widmer

makes recognizable varieties of everyday, affordable cheese (as is customary in Wisconsin, his Cheddar is colored brightly orange by annatto). But unlike Olson (whose handmade cheese was until recently sold under the Kraft label), he has taken steps to ensure that his product is not categorized or confused with industrial cheese. He notes, "One of the things that made somebody like me an artisan wasn't inventing new cheeses, it was sticking with what I did. Then a lot of people, their companies evolved into a giant where it was all machine-made stuff and it turns into a commodity type of thing. By sticking to tradition, it made us winners."

Although Widmer insists the cheese itself has not changed—he follows the same recipe, buys milk from the same patrons, pasteurizes the milk because that is what his predecessors did, even uses the same bricks to press the cheeses—the quality of the cheese, understood in symbolic as well as economic terms, *has* arguably changed. It is winning awards. It is fetching higher prices. Widmer tacitly acknowledges that his cheese is, in part anyway, what anthropologist Marilyn Strathern would call "quality-enhanced": "Quality is not there to be discovered: those attributes which define things are made explicit, even superadded, in the course of the marketing process."³³

Change predicated on continuity is accomplished by "a collapse of the essential and the superadded...the difference between what is taken for granted in the nature of the product and what is perceived to be the result of extra human effort."³⁴ What Pierre Boisard writes of French Camembert is equally applicable to Wisconsin Brick and Limburger: "the modernity of today can become the tradition of tomorrow, much as the most established tradition can give rise to an unanticipated modernity."³⁵ In marketing his handmade cheese to capitalize on newer artisan enterprises, Widmer is not just "sticking with" what he was already doing but relying on a discriminating consumer culture to discover the twenty-first-century value of artisanship as an attribute newly inherent in his eighty-year-old cheese, developed when the symbolic value of its manufacture (and taste) meant something else entirely: Swiss-German, working-class, local tavern.

Tasting Cheese Histories

Contrary to popular assumptions that "change is a mark of activity or endeavor whereas continuity somehow is not,"³⁶ continuity in American artisan cheese manufacture has been obscured by shifting class and gender dynamics surrounding craftsmanship, as well as by an ideological

commitment to innovation as itself appropriately modern, progressive, American—and thus a marketable value. In other words, not only is the entrepreneurial spirit evident in today’s “renaissance” in artisan cheesemaking part of and indebted to a longstanding, invented tradition of innovation, but the American pioneering ideal has itself contributed to a collective neglect of an ongoing history of artisan cheesemaking, one long characterized by innovation in marketing as well as craft method.³⁷

Owing to a cultural amnesia nurtured by the American dream of class mobility, Americans who do not come from dairying backgrounds and whose personal sentiments (stewardship of agricultural land, commitment to quality food, love of ruminant animals) motivate them to produce craft cheese, are often bestowed (and eagerly adopt) a pioneering narrative of reseeding the New World with the cultures of the Old.³⁸ This story of American rebirth is buttressed on the opposite side of the Atlantic by the substantial legal and political apparatus necessary to ensure, for example, the continued fabrication of officially “traditional” Camembert de Normandie as distinguishable from the mass manufacture of non-AOC Camembert. As Susan Terrio writes, “Claims of cultural authenticity in advanced capitalism are often linked to an ideal, aestheticized premodern past as well as the groups, labor forms and products associated with it.”³⁹

As the image of “American cheese” moves further from the pasteurized processed stuff, and through the educational work of such organizations as the American Cheese Society and regional cheese guilds, America’s artisan past and present might find new articulation. Raymond Williams writes:

As these practical distinctions are pressed, within a given mode of production, **art** and **artist** acquire ever more general (and more vague) associations, offering to express a general *human* (i.e. non-utilitarian) interest, even while, ironically, most **works of art** are effectively treated as commodities and most **artists**, even when they justly claim quite other intentions, are effectively treated as a category of independent craftsmen or skilled workers producing a certain kind of marginal commodity.⁴⁰

If we apply these ideas to American artisan cheese culture, we find that even as the “cheesemaker’s art” is increasingly called upon not to specify technique but instead to bring attention to the non-utilitarian values that motivate today’s cheesemakers to take up this low-tech, economically risky enterprise, artisan cheeses themselves have become increasingly popular commodities at farmer’s markets and restaurants and high-end national chains such as Whole Foods. If artisan cheese undergoes

“extensification”—Sidney Mintz’s term for a simultaneous expansion of a commodity good’s popular consumption and decline in its cultural status—cheesemakers themselves may come to be recognized not as free spirits following their dreams “back to the land” but as skilled workers performing artisan labor appreciated by, but rather unremarkable to, their local, regional, or national customers—much as yesterday’s cheese factory workers.⁴¹ Across the country, future artisans, hoping that their children will carry on the family business and brand, may come to recognize kinship with Joe Widmer’s grandfather. A continuous tradition of American artisan cheesemaking, joining preindustrial and post-industrial eras, may yet be invented. ◉

NOTES

1. I would like to thank the cheesemakers who gave me their time and attention over the course of this research. An early version of this essay was presented at “Tasting Histories: Food and Drink Cultures Through the Ages,” at the Robert Mondavi Institute for Wine and Food Science at the University of California at Davis. Melissa Caldwell, Elizabeth Ferry, Stefan Helmreich, Smita Lahiri, Janet McIntosh, Ann Marie Leshkovich, Ajantha Subramanian, and Christine Walley provided helpful comments on previous drafts. Roe Smith supplied useful historical resources. I am grateful, too, for the encouragement and suggestions of Darra Goldstein and two reviewers for this journal. Research was supported by the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, Gr. 7641.

In 1995 volunteers video-recorded interviews with over 250 former cheesemakers, dairy farmers, cheese graders, and wives of cheesemakers “to create an oral history library of the cheesemaking industry.” Transcripts of several of these interviews, available for viewing on VHS at the Historical Center, constitute a source for this paper.

2. Glenn T. Trewartha, “The Green County, Wisconsin, Foreign Cheese Industry,” *Economic Geography* 2:2 (1926): 292–308.

3. Paul Kindstedt, *American Farmstead Cheese: The Complete Guide to Making and Selling Artisan Cheeses* (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green, 2005); Jeffrey P. Roberts, *The Atlas of American Artisan Cheese* (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green, 2007), xx.

4. Sally McMurry, *Transforming Rural Life: Dairying Families and Agricultural Change, 1820–1885* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); Kristina Nies, “Chore, Craft & Business: Cheesemaking in 18th Century Massachusetts,” MA Thesis, Boston University, 2008.

5. Carlo Petrini, “Foreword,” in Roberts, *The Atlas of American Artisan Cheese*, ix.

6. Liz Thorpe, *The Cheese Chronicles: A Journey Through the Making and Selling of Cheese in America, From Field to Farm to Table* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), 141.

7. Amish cheesemaking represents a third, related historic trajectory. Attracted by cheaper land, the Amish moved from Pennsylvania and Ohio beginning in the 1970s to settle in large numbers in Wisconsin. Salemville Cheese Factory, which accepted milk in metal cans rather than refrigerated tank trucks, has been cooperatively bought by an Amish community that found in cheese an outlet for milk produced on nonautomated farms. Old Country Wisconsin Cheese Factory was built in 1983 with Amish labor to serve a similar purpose; it employs a non-Amish cheesemaker. John Cross, “Expansion of Amish Dairy Farming in Wisconsin,” *Journal of Cultural Geography* 21:2 (2004): 77–101.

8. In the first American Cheese Society competition in 1985, thirty cheesemakers from eighteen states entered a total of eighty-nine cheeses, both commercial and homemade. Ricki Carroll, “The American Cheese Society: A History,” *Newsletter of the American Cheese Society* (October 1999): 1, 12–13. In 2009 197 producers from thirty-two states, three Canadian provinces and, for the first time, from Mexico (the competition was held in Austin, Texas), entered a record number of 1,327 commercially available cheeses.

9. www.cheesesociety.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticleid=51.

10. Sally Markowitz, "The Distinction between Art and Craft," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 28:1 (1994): 55–70; Bruce Metcalf, "Replacing the Myth of Modernism," in *NeoCraft: Modernity and the Crafts*, ed. Sandra Alföldy (Halifax: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design Press, 2007), 4–32.
11. Pamela Smith, *The Body of the Artisan: Art and Experience in the Scientific Revolution* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004).
12. Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 41.
13. According to the Food and Drug Administration's Code of Federal Regulations, Sec. 133.169, "Pasteurized process cheese" is defined as "food prepared by comminuting and mixing, with the aid of heat, one or more cheeses of the same or two or more varieties...for manufacturing with an emulsifying agent...into a homogeneous plastic mass." Among process cheeses, "when cheddar cheese, washed curd cheese, colby cheese, granular cheese, or any mixture of two or more of these is combined with other varieties of cheese in the cheese ingredient, any of such cheeses or such mixture may be designated as 'American cheese'."
14. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 2.
15. David Sutton, "'Tradition' and 'Modernity': Kalyimian Constructions of Identity and Otherness," *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 12:2 (1994): 239–260; Jane F. Collier, *From Duty to Desire: Remaking Families in a Spanish Village* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Susan Terrio, *Crafting the Culture and History of French Chocolate* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Heather Paxson, *Making Modern Mothers: Ethics and Family Planning in Urban Greece* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).
16. AOC stands for Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée; DOC for Denominazione di Origine Controllata. They are the French and Italian labels, respectively, to guarantee "controlled designation of origin." To gain AOC or DOC status, agricultural production must conform to strictly regulated standards and occur within geographically limited areas. See Pierre Boisard, "The Future of a Tradition: Two Ways of Making Camembert, The Foremost Cheese of France," *Food and Foodways* 4:3+4 (1991): 173–207; Cristina Grasseni, "Packaging Skills: Calibrating Cheese to a Global Market," in *Commodifying Everything: Relationships of the Market*, ed. Susan Strasser (New York: Routledge, 2003), 259–288; Juliette Rogers, "The Political Lives of Dairy Cows: Modernity, Tradition, and Professional Identity in the Norman Cheese Industry," Ph.D. Dissertation, Brown University (2008).
17. Roberts, *Atlas*, xiii.
18. McMurry, *Transforming Rural Life*, 83. For a contemporary technical discussion see Peter Dixon, "The Art of Cheesemaking," in *American Farmstead Cheese: The Complete Guide to Making and Selling Artisan Cheeses*, ed. Paul Kindsteadt (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green, 2005), 209–210.
19. Paul Wood, "Cheese-Making Tools and Machinery, Part II," *The Chronicle of the Early American Industries Association*, 62:2 (June, 2009): 53–70.
20. Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974).
21. McMurry, *Transforming Rural Life*, 129.
22. *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, according to which a second meaning of *slatternly* is "of, relating to, or characteristic of a slut or prostitute." McMurry, *Transforming Rural Life*, 168.
23. "American Artisan Cheesemakers Survey" was distributed online as a Web-based survey of artisan creameries and farmstead cheesemakers in February 2009, with a hard copy mailed to twenty-one businesses for which a current e-mail address was not available. Four hundred and two businesses were invited to participate in the survey (one response per company), which elicited a 45 percent response rate (177/398). Survey data analyzed with the help of Elizabeth Page.
24. McMurry, *Transforming Rural Life*, 96.
25. Heather Paxson, "Artisanal Cheese and Economies of Sentiment in New England," in *Fast Food/Slow Food: The Cultural Economy of the Global Food System*, ed. Richard Wilk (Lanham, MD: Altamira, 2006), 201–217; Heather Paxson, "Locating Value in Artisan Cheese: Reverse-Engineering *Terroir* for New World Landscapes," *American Anthropologist* 112:3 (September 2010): 442–455.
26. www.crowleycheese-vermont.com/.
27. Robert Ulin, "Work as Cultural Production: Labour and Self-Identity among Southwest French Wine Growers," *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 8:4 (December 2002): 691–712. See also Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (New York: Routledge, 1984).
28. Laura Werlin, *The New American Cheese: Profiles of America's Great Cheesemakers and Recipes for Cooking with Cheese* (New York: Stewart, Tabori and Chang, 2000); Henry Tewksbury, *The Cheeses of Vermont: A Gourmet Guide to Vermont's Artisanal Cheesemakers* (Woodstock, VT: Countryman Press, 2002); Ellen Ecker Ogden, *The Vermont Cheese Book* (Woodstock, VT: Countryman Press, 2007); Clark Wolf, *American Cheeses: The Best Regional, Artisan, and Farmhouse Cheeses: Who Makes Them and Where to Find Them* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008); Jeanette Hurt, *The Cheeses of Wisconsin: A Culinary Travel Guide* (Woodstock, VT: Countryman Press, 2008); Tami Parr, *Artisan Cheese of the Pacific Northwest: A Discovery Guide* (Woodstock, VT: Countryman Press, 2009); Max McCalman with David Gibbons, *Mastering Cheese: Lessons for Connoisseurship from a Maître Fromager* (New York: Clarkson Potter, 2009).
29. Oral history interviews from 1995 with Albert Deppeler and Myron Olson, National Historic Cheesemaking Center, Monroe, Wisconsin.
30. See Deborah Heath and Anne Meneley, "Techné, Technoscience, and the Circulation of Comestible Commodities: An Introduction," *American Anthropologist* 109:4 (2007): 593–602.
31. Wolf, *American Cheeses*, 159.
32. Jerry Apps, *Cheese: The Making of a Wisconsin Tradition* (Amherst, WI: Amherst Press, 1998), 139.
33. Marilyn Strathern, *Reproducing the Future: Anthropology, Kinship, and the New Reproductive Technologies* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 38.
34. *Ibid.*, 39.
35. Boisard, "Future of a Tradition," 174.
36. Marilyn Strathern, *After Nature: English Kinship in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 2.
37. The oldest continuously operating cheese factory in the country, Marin French Cheese Company in Petaluma, California, got its start in 1865 after Jefferson Thompson, a dairy farmer, recognized an emergent niche market in the port town of San Francisco. Soon he was supplying European stevedores with fresh cheeses served in dockside saloons. As Jim Boyce, the company's current owner and CEO, told me the story in a 2008 interview, he marveled, "It's pure marketing—marketing at its greatest! It's the individual saying, 'What if?'—What if European dockhands were offered cheese at the tavern in place of pickled eggs with their ale?"
38. In *American Artisanal: Finding the Country's Best Real Food, from Cheese to Chocolate* (New York: Rizzoli, 2008), Rebecca Gray writes of Allison Hooper's Vermont Butter & Cheese Company chèvre: "I like to think that Allison made her goat cheese American, bright and new in taste, but reminiscent of the Old World, too" (p.112).
39. Susan J. Terrio, "Crafting Grand Cru Chocolates in Contemporary France," *American Anthropologist* 98:1 (1996): 67–79.
40. Williams, *Keywords*, 42.
41. Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Penguin, 1985), 122.