

# holiday pairings

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What's on your holiday table? We delve into *artisan cheeses* from MT. TOWNSEND CREAMERY, exploring wine and food *matches*



The aging room filled with wheels of Trailhead in varying stages. This mountain-style tomme recently won two national awards.

## find the cheese

During the winter months, you'll find these cheese at weekend farmers markets at Ballard, University Place, West Seattle and Capitol Hill.

Or check out these local food retailers:

**Beecher's Handmade Cheese** in Seattle, **DeLaurenti** in Seattle, **Whole Foods** in western Washington, **Madison Market, Metropolitan Markets, Central Market** stores, **Resident Cheesemonger** in Edmonds, **Salumiere Cesario** in Walla Walla, **Saunders's Cheese Market** in Spokane and **Olympia Food Coop**

Visit the creamery store, stocked with specialty foods and accessories that pair with cheese, located at 338 Sherman Street in Port Townsend, WA 98368. They are open to visitors from 11am to 6pm every Wednesday to Saturday, and Sunday from 11am to 4pm. You can also order directly from their website at [www.mttownsendcreamery.com](http://www.mttownsendcreamery.com)

When entrepreneurs Matt Day and Ryan Trail brainstormed on a startup venture in Port Townsend, Matt wanted to start a **MICROBREWERY**. Ryan wanted to try his hand at making **DISTILLED SPIRITS**. Fortunately for the rest of us, they comprised on **CHEESE**. Mt. Townsend Creamery crafts **SMALL BATCHES OF CHEESE** using centuries-old French recipes. Their cheeses reflect the Olympic Peninsula **TERROIR**, from the salty sea air wafting in from the Strait of Juan de Fuca to the rocky soils of nearby grazing pastures. The **MILK** is sourced from **GRASS FED, HORMONE-FREE COWS** raised by two **LOCAL DAIRIES** that don't allow chemical fertilizers on their pastures. Mt. Townsend Creamery is in Port Townsend, but it's **NAMED AFTER A MOUNTAIN** in the Olympics—Mt. Townsend, the nearest peak to the creamery. Let the cheese sit out for an hour prior to **SERVING**. **STORE** any leftovers in wax paper in the fridge.

## Seastack (Chaource)

Named after the craggy coastal seastacks, this is an indulgent treat from the first glance. Its contrasting black and white surface gives it a striking appearance, making it an ideal candidate for the center of a cheese plate. Cutting it open reveals the stark white interior; when young, the paste is dense and fudgy, reminiscent of some Loire Valley goat cheeses, while a riper example may be slightly oozing near the edges.

**UNIQUE ASH AND SEA SALT RIND** Seastack curds are sprinkled with sea salt and rubbed with sterile vegetable ash, resulting in what is termed a double rind—being doubly coated with ash and white bloomy brie mold. The edible ash is both decorative and also keeps in the moisture as it ripens slowly over three to four weeks.

**Tasting notes:** The first bite is buttery fresh creaminess which coats the mouth, imparting hints of citrus interspersed with savory notes of sea spray, black pepper, mushrooms, a whiff of the barn, and a hint of blue cheese.

**Sip:** Try with a fruity wine such as a Viognier, Riesling or Pinot Noir, which offsets the delicately savory flavor of the cheese. Anything sparkling or bubbly, but it's fairly wine-friendly, so do experiment.

**Munch:** Black cherry preserves, fig spread, onion jams, and pickled raisons make an exotic pairing for soft-ripened cheese. Sweet fruit such as grapes, pears and apples enhance the cheese's yeasty flavors. Cured deli meats like

prosciutto, salami, crackers and crusty bread are simple but classic companions.

## Cirrus: (Camembert)

Named after the thin white clouds that develop over the Olympic peaks, Cirrus is a creamy rendition of the classic Norman Camembert.

**Tasting notes:** Light citrus flavor, tangy in the center that evolves into garlic and mushroom notes (from the soft rind), with a smooth finish.

**Sip:** Pairs well with lighter white or mildly fruity wines, such as a Pinot Gris, Riesling or Rosè. Anything sparkling or bubbly.

**Munch:** Quince jelly paste is a nice savory/sweet combination, also fruit and food pairings listed above under the Seastack.

## Trailhead (Tomme)

Trailhead is a mountain-style tomme; a sturdy semi-soft (or medium hard) cheese pressed into six-pound wheels and then ripened to a beautiful golden straw color interior. The rind is washed with saltwater and yeasts for two months, and aged for an additional two months to develop its full flavor profile.

**Tasting notes:** Rich buttery texture with nutty flavors.

**Sip:** Drier white wines that are higher in acidity pair well, such as a Chardonnay or Sauvignon Blanc.

**Munch:** Deli meats, rustic breads, pair with fruit, or a meal on its own. Shave onto pizzas, salads, and soups. 🍷

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Trailhead wheel and slice; Seastack wedges and rounds; wedge of Cirrus, a Pacific Northwest Camembert.