

FRASER

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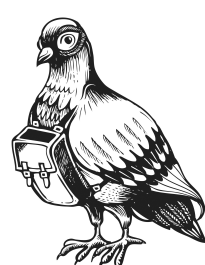
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TROLLEY DOLLY

Anthony Schepper, Orrery's 'frommelier', on his stewardship of one of London's most famous cheese trolleys

INTERVIEW: CLARE FINNEY

A 'frommelier' isn't really an official profession—my job is that of a cheesemonger, or cheese specialist. I work with suppliers, prepare the cheese trolley, guide the customers through their cheese course and organise our monthly cheese tastings here at Orrery. I've been working in the cheese business for 15 years now: I attended a specialist school in France for a time, but most of what I've learnt I have learnt from scratch at various restaurants in London, France and Spain.

For French people, cheese is often the best part of the meal: they have it before, they have it during, they have it after, they have it just on its own with wine—they have it any time. When I first came to this country I worked at the Savoy hotel, and I started to learn about British cheese. Stinking Bishop was one of the first British cheeses I learned about, but there are more and more all the time: people used to just buy French cheese in this country, but there are more varieties of cheese in the UK than there are in France these days. Only last week, a supplier came in to do a small tasting with me and the chef, and we discovered a new cheese, Lancashire Bomber. It's a creamy cheese, wrapped in black wax and it looks like a bomb. I'd never seen anything like it before.

Working in Barcelona, I discovered a new culture of food: partly rustic, partly innovative, and I worked with both types of chef during my time there. I worked at Restaurant Gaig, a very old, Michelin-starred restaurant which didn't just have a cheese trolley, but an



olive oil and sweet trolley too—and it was there that I learned about manchego, cabrales and other Spanish cheeses. I returned to London in 2010, and since then have got into cheese more and more, visiting producers, suppliers and cheesemongers all over the country. To work across the road from what I believe is the best cheese shop in all of London, La Fromagerie,

is a dream come true for me. Just like some people can spend hours in a shoe shop, I can spend hours in La Fromagerie looking at cheese.

At Orrery, we work with Fromagerie Beillevaire: one of the oldest cheese companies in France, located in the Loire valley. They source the classics—comté, roquefort, brie and so on—but they get trendy

cheeses from Italy, Spain, Wales, Ireland, England, Switzerland, France, of course, and I am looking to get some cheese from Belgium.

Funnily enough, red wine is not always the best partner to cheese. If I got cheese from Belgium, I'd be tempted to pair it with beer. The best with comté is champagne, or a buttery Burgundy white. Blue cheeses go beautifully with white port, and last year we did a pairing of whisky, chocolate and cheese, which was very interesting. A good guide is to choose alcohol from the same region the cheese is from.

It can take a good five minutes for guests to choose from the cheese trolley. It's a really fun, interactive experience—like choosing wine, but with cheese you can see it and try it. We ask the guests if they are drawn to anything visually, and what their favourite cheeses are. Then we describe the cheeses, and offer them a taste, and allow them to say what they like—or don't like—about it, so we can help them find a selection they will really enjoy. We encourage our guests to be open-minded: we've 30 cheeses in total, and there is a range in each 'family': blue, soft, hard, and so on. Sometimes, if a group is having the tasting menu, when it comes to the cheese course we ask them to choose the first plate, and allow us to choose a second, so they can compare their selection with ours. Some of our guests regularly come in just for the cheese—some of them know more about cheese than me!

ORRERY
55 Marylebone High Street, W1U 5RB
orrery-restaurant.co.uk

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cheeses too, like Brillat-Savarin, which we like to serve with truffle inside as a special treat. We try to keep it interesting for people—especially our French customers—by having cheese from eight different countries, and changing our selection from season to season. The stilton is really good at the moment: we scoop it out of the wheel with a spoon. We have

