



XI CHEESE FESTIVAL IN SAND IN TAUFERS, 07-09.03.2014

World-famous holes

11th Cheese Festival in Sand in Taufers from 7 to 9 March in the town centre | Some 100 exhibitors from Upper Italy and the Alpine regions | New products: *Oszypek* smoked cheese from Poland and *Knoblauchröster* garlic cheese from Germany | People & cheese

Laboratories of good taste

Alessandra and Roberto run a small, smart hostelry down in Romagna. And their passion is cheese. They will be telling some fascinating stories at the eleventh Cheese Festival, for instance how cheese makers used to dig deep holes in the earth, lined with peat to make them airtight, and then laid straw inside. The cheese, usually of ewe's or goat's milk, was then put into jute bags and stored in these holes, or "*fosse*". The cheese makers of Romagna use this method to produce cheese to this very day. There are also tales of cheese that is stored and matured in caves or grottoes rather than in earthen pits. A special taste develops in such places: the underground maturing process contributes to the charm of such cheeses.

At the eleventh Cheese Festival in Sand in Taufers, to be held from 7 to 9 March 2014, cheese of this very type will be offered for tasting along with a glass of Sangiovese wine. Alessandra and Roberto will show how they combine wine and cheese flavours in their own taste laboratory ("*Laboratorio del Gusto*"), as well as how they conjure up tasty treats from cheese leftovers...

These *laboratori del gusto* are becoming more and more popular with visitors, with ever more people fascinated by cheese-making and all that it involves. Gourmets practically melt with delight when Dominik Flammer describes this new interest in blue cheese, all while offering up delicacies for tasting. Vegetarians too will jump for joy when Andrea Bovo explains that delicious cheese can also be made without the use of rennet, produced from calves' stomachs.

"It's the people that make it!"

Everyone involved in the Cheese Festival has the same impression: it's the people that make this cheese market into a festival. Alessandra and Roberto, Dominik Flammer, Ursula Heinzemann, Armando Gambera, Stefano Mariotti, not forgetting Marlen and Lissi, or Karin, Maria, Priska and Roberto, to say nothing of Ursula and Agnes and Pepe and many other locals who all light up this event with their enormous enthusiasm. "Everybody helps out: they don't ask questions, they just get on with the job without clockwatching."

This enthusiasm can be felt, which makes the Cheese Festival a magnet for everyone to come and meet and indulge their taste buds together. Locals are strongly represented over the course of the event, which takes place every two years and is eagerly awaited: on the phone, between Festival years, the disappointment is palpable when the answer is no, sorry, not this year...

It's the people that make it! Librarians Isolde and Agatha in Sand in Taufers have opened a special exhibition on... you guessed it. Franz from the Nature Park Visitor Centre in the town centre has put on a display of original implements for cheese production that bear witness to the inventiveness of the past, while Chris and Roby and the rest from the Icebar just opposite are staging a Cheese Party with bands Queen Laurin and Delirio Cover Band: each of the "Cheese Days" will also end in style.

Of holes & writers

Dominik Flammer is one of the world's finest cheese writers, a cheese connoisseur like few others. At the Cheese Market he relates the story of the world-famous holes found in Emmental cheese. He also tells of the strange interaction between wood, resin and cheese, and of the *Hölzige Schaf* ("woody sheep"), a soft cheese that matures wrapped in the bark of mountain spruce and which has a rind "whose consumption is recommended"...

Then there is Ursula Heinzlmann from the Sunday magazine of Germany's *Frankfurter Allgemeiner* newspaper, who describes herself as a "writer on wine and food" and who as a self-confessed cheese fan will be presenting a live brunch from the famous Market Hall Nine in Berlin Kreuzberg: the topic will be "the inner workings of unique products".

Present too will be Stefano Mariotti, publisher, journalist and one of Italy's greatest cheese connoisseurs, whose portal www.qualeformaggio.it untiringly emphasises the quality of the Cheese Festival and has been supporting it from the outset.

Kids love cheese!

Saying kids love cheese is like saying Emmental has holes in it. So a special programme with Agnes and Roberto lets children learn how to make South Tyrolean grey cheese or to produce mozzarella, that absolute must for pizza. They can then taste the results, or try some of the other specialities, for instance Oszypek from Poland, the conical cheese from the High Tatra mountains. Conical, not comical: this ewe's milk cheese needs an hour before it takes on its shape. It is one of the many unusual products on offer at the Sand in Taufers Cheese Festival.

Also this year are the curious cheese-themed postage stamps. Do they actually taste of Emmental when you lick them? Or are the perforated edges made of cheese? From Blue Mauritius to blue cheese... visit the special Taufers Post Office on Sunday from eleven to six, where special cheese stamps, postmarks and other philatelic curiosities like the so-called *annullo postale speciale* postmark can be seen.

Slow food, ONAF and grey cheese

Grey cheese from the Ahrntal Valley, a South Tyrolean delicacy, is perhaps not to everyone's taste. Aromatic and increasingly pungent with age, it is nevertheless been designated by the Slow Food movement as a "*presidio*", a specially protected food threatened with extinction. There are at present some 224 *presidi*, about forty of which are cheeses. The Slow Food association is dedicated to culinary pleasures and, with its *presidio* system, makes a major contribution to the protection of rare animal breeds, the preservation of biodiversity, as well as the continued existence of small businesses and alternative farming methods. In terms of *presidi*, the Cheese Festival is in fact the world's second most important platform, with over thirty *presidi* represented. There will also be a Slow Food restaurant in the Atrium: the *Locanda al Gambero Rosso* will be tempting palates at the Festival throughout the day and into the evening.

Appearing for the first time will be ONAF, Italy's National Organisation of Cheese Tasters. The aim of ONAF is to spread the word about this most delicious of all foods by means of the seminars it holds all over Italy. Armando Gambera, head tester at ONAF, has for years been coming to Sand in Taufers to offer short seminars at the Festival. He is an all-round cheese specialist who brings with him a vast stock of anecdotes and information on the subject. One example: those who are lactose-intolerant can still enjoy cheese that has been matured for a long period, as this process reduces the disaccharide content.

Show cooking, showing & cooking

The magic served up by the top chefs booked for the Festival is sure to enchant every cheese lover. They can be seen in action on each of the three days, practising their skills in public from 10 to 6. On

display will be plenty of wizardry, polished details and tasty end products to savour, along with tastings, musings and exchanges of experience.

There will also be the unsung cooks there, students and retirees from the hotel management schools of Meran and Bruneck, each of them cooking for pure joy – and for free...

Favourite cheeses & tales

In the midst of all the excitement will be a small island of calm: the Atrium. There visitors can stop and spend some time relaxing, for instance at tastings offered by cheese specialists who will be bringing along three of their favourite cheeses, accompanied by the appropriate wine, all while telling amusing and interesting tales.

A delicate touch

Another curiosity will be present at the Cheese Festival in Sand in Taufers in March 2014 – the “*Knoblauchröster*”, garlic cheese from Germany. Garlic is (in)famous for its aftertaste, but adds piquancy to numerous dishes and can also be of benefit to the cardiovascular system. On offer at the Cheese Festival is a refined and milder version of this pungent root, with the flavour lingering (rather than trampling) on the tongue...

Comparative tasting

At every cheese market the public has an important task, namely the tasting and judging of different types of cheese. In this case, the products are from South Tyrolean farmhouse cheese makers. It is no easy task, in fact quite the opposite. This comparative tasting enjoys enormous popularity as well as exciting considerable attention, as the first prize is a quality seal. On Saturday at noon the expert jury will select the winner, with the public prize immediately following.

High standard

Over the years one particular maxim has been followed: to limit the number of exhibitors and producers to around one hundred. This permits control to be maintained and guarantees special and unique products, while ensuring diversity and high standards for the food fair.

Top fare!

This year will see more restaurants and hotels cooking with cheese than ever before! A total of fourteen establishments in Sand in Taufers, Mühlen, Ahornach and as far away as Kiens in the Pustertal Valley will this year be offering cheese menus accompanied by fine wines. Both the traditional and the new will be served up: there is still plenty for cheese fans to learn about.

Cheese & blogs

A new and exciting idea made its debut at the previous Cheese Festival, with famed food bloggers reporting on social networks in real time. And this idea promptly took second place at the SMART Social Media Crystal 2013, an Interreg project intended to make small and medium-sized enterprises more competitive by means of social media. That is reason enough for continuing, even if it is somewhat time-consuming... take a look!

www.kaesefestival.com

07-09.03.14, 10:00-19:00, Sand in Taufers town centre