



# CHEESE MATTERS

Raw

BY KRIS LLOYD

**O**riol Urgell, a Barcelona cheese expert, recently paid me a visit at the cheese factory in Woodside. His experience spans for more than 20 years with the Spanish and EU dairy industries; he is also an accomplished cheese judge. His purpose in Australia was primarily to visit cheese makers to assist them with technical aspects of their craft and their facilities. I took Oriol through a Woodside Cheese Wrights degustation in order to gain insights about our cheese making standards given his vast judging experience.

One cheese stood out for him and perhaps came as no surprise. Our raw milk version of the semi-hard goat-milk cheese we call Figaro. His brow furrowed in deep concentration before he said, "This is the best cheese I have tasted all year. This is very good, it is elegant but has length of flavour and is very complex, I am very happy to taste this." I had to explain that this cheese was only for tasting, it is not commercially available due to our current Food Safety Standards regulations laid down by Food Standards Australia and New Zealand.

I have been making raw milk cheese for more than 10 years for my own interest and use. I have conducted many blind tastings over this period with individuals across many disciplines who I consider to have excellent palates. When I make these cheeses I ensure they are made from the same milk source on the same day; one batch raw, one batch pasteurised and finally matured in identical conditions for the same length of time.

Interestingly all the findings have consistently pointed to the raw milk version as a complex and more dynamic offering with length of flavour and a slight paste colour variation. When travelling, this is also consistent with my own experience

with raw milk cheese. I personally would like to have the choice of making raw milk cheese and I believe the consumer should also have the choice to purchase raw milk cheese. It puzzles me somewhat, that I can purchase raw milk Roquefort legally in Australia. It is made in France, using French milk from somewhere, by an unknown French cheese maker, shipped to Australia over several days and it is all quite legal. I, on the other hand, a reasonably well-known Australian cheese maker, who can point to the local milk source and ship to retailers next day, am forbidden to make the same cheese and have it commercially available for consumers who wish to buy it.

Nobody in their right mind would want to produce anything that could be harmful to eat, that is why we have food safety systems and they most definitely have their place. However, if I am prepared to make raw milk cheese within a tight food safety framework and test it before I release it for sale – and if the cheese is microbiologically safe – why then can I not have the choice to make and sell this product?

Currently there is a clause in the Standard that allows a version of raw milk cheese making, which is a step in the right direction, however, it is not true raw milk cheese making and it does not allow styles such as Roquefort, which are higher in moisture and softer, to be produced. While I am working within that framework to bring my version of raw milk Figaro, which we will name Greedy Goat, to market I have had to change the way I produce the cheese to meet the criteria and obviously the result is different.

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\* **Kris Lloyd** is **Woodside Cheese Wrights'**  
Head Cheese Maker

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