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THE BIG CHEESE

Winners, any way you slice it

Two Ontario companies snag top honours at cheese 'Superbowl'

Aug 20, 2009 04:30 AM

IVY KNIGHT
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

While so many of our country's chefs were angrily tweeting about not being included in Phaidon's soon-to-be-published book, *Coco: 100 Emerging Culinary Stars Chosen by 10 of the World's Greatest Chefs*, cheesemakers at Fifth Town and Black River were hard at work making some world-class cheeses.

Not one Canadian made it into *Coco*, a fact duly noted and challenged by Canadian chefs Marc Thuet and Susur Lee, among others, all over cyberspace.

At the same time, Fifth Town Artisan Cheese and Black River Cheese Company took three prizes at the American Cheese Society Awards in Austin, Tex., the "Superbowl" of cheese competitions.

These two Ontario cheesemakers, who were competing against wheels and wedges from all over North America, were awarded a first, second and third place ranking out of some 1,327 entries.

"We were very excited to hear the news about the award for our goat cheddar," says Martin Miller, president of Black River, which has been in operation for 108 years and is the only cheese factory remaining from many that were started in Prince Edward County, near Belleville.

Black River collaborated with the much younger Fifth Town on the Goat Cheddar, which took third place.

"We opened our arms and our vats to Fifth Town when they were starting up," says Miller. "When we came up with the idea to combine Fifth Town's goat milk and our cheddar-making expertise, we didn't know just how well our Goat Cheddar would be received."

Fifth Town's Cape Vessey won second place in the Washed Rind Goat Category and its Lighthall Tomme grabbed first in the Aged Goat Cheese Category.





"We truly have a dedicated and talented cheese-making team, led by our master cheesemaker, Stephanie Diamant," says Fifth Town owner Petra Cooper.

Named for Cooper's mother-in-law, the Lighthall Tomme is a firm, natural rind goat cheese that is typically aged two to three months or longer. It has a smooth, firm texture and a pleasant, nutty flavour.



PETRA COOPER PHOTO


Lighthall Tomme, named after the Fifth Town owner's mother-in-law, took first in the Aged Goat Cheese Category.

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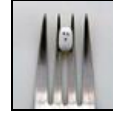
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See cheesesociety.org for full results of the competition.

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