

Fond O' Foods bringing fine Bavarian cheeses to the U.S.

Just mentioning a company that carries on the traditions of a master cheese maker from the Bavarian Alps of southern Germany is enough to make your mouth water. If that's not enough, your heart will warm when the owner, founder and president of

such a company, Birgit Bernhard of Sutter Creek, introduces herself, and her lively smile and bright eyes immediately convey what she calls her company's Inner Mission: "To honor and respect my grandfather and to uphold his memory and his love for the

art of cheese-making."

Fond O' Foods, Inc., which Bernhard operates with the invaluable help of fiancé Kurt Hoffman, also in the food distribution business, is a company that sources, selects and imports cheeses and breads from the Allgau

region of Germany to the United States. The broader mission of the three-year old company, first introduced at the 2006 San Francisco Fancy Food Show, includes the following: "Fond O' Foods was created to ex-

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plore the world of great tasting cheeses from Germany and bring them to tables across the United States. We have a close relationship with our German cheese makers and the dairies we work with. We believe good food, made in a harmonious environment, nurtures not only our bodies, but our souls and hearts ..."

The Allgau region of southwestern Bavaria rests in the heart of German dairy country. Bernhard was born and raised in this rustic and picturesque mountain setting, and it is from there she imports fine hand-

made cheeses made from the milk of "cows who still have names."

Bernhard's grandfather was a highly regarded master cheese maker in the region, able to "listen to a wheel of cheese and know if it was aged well and of good quality," Bernhard said. After attending a university in Germany, she followed her grandfather's example, and worked for 15 years for the U.S. office of Champignon, a German cheese dairy her grandfather acquired.

Currently, Fond O' Foods imports six varieties of German cheese, including Rhinette, a creamy and smooth washed-rind cheese brushed with apple cider derived from Lake

Constance region apples, and Chiantino, a semi-soft, washed-rind cheese, bathed carefully in red wine from nearby Italy. (Although not sharing a border with Italy, the Allgau region of Bavaria separates itself from Northern Italy by a mere fifty-mile wide slice of Austria.) New cheeses not yet listed on the Web site, but currently available are Temptin and Bavarian Emmentaler.

Thanks to Bernhard's grandfather, who passed his craft on to others in the Allgau region, Bernhard has many artisan cheeses from which to select.

Imported breads also dot the Fond O' Food menu. Called Fond O' Breads, this branch of the company

offers leavened whole grain breads in three varieties: classic rye, sunflower seed and hazelnut.

Stores throughout Northern California carry Fond O' Foods cheeses, including Nugget Markets, Whole Foods, Safeway, certain Costco locations and a host of gourmet specialty stores throughout the Bay Area, such as Andronico's, Sigona's and Piedmont Grocery. In Amador County, find Fond O' Foods cheeses at Andrae's in Amador City and Safeway. Taste Restaurant in Plymouth also uses Bernhard's finds on occasion.

For more information, visit www.fondofoods.com, or contact Bernhard at birgit.bernhard@fondofoods.com.