

Zingerman's®

news

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2007

you really *can* taste the difference!

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FOODS I'M THANKFUL *to Have* AND THAT I'M JUST AS HAPPY *to Give*

new!

a Pair of Special Cheeses from the Mountains of Southern Germany

Over the last twenty-five years I've kind of come to believe that there's good food to be found almost everywhere which leads me, literally, not in person (yet) to Southern Germany. It's an area I might think of for beer, maybe ham from the Black Forest, which is why I was so excited to stumble upon these two cheeses—when it comes to cheese Germany just isn't the place that I think of. But I'll take the rap for that. And I'll volunteer to start the process of changing the image.

I really just happened on these cheeses serendipitously. I met a woman name Birgit Bernhard at one of the fifteen-plus food shows I go to each year. I stopped at her stand to taste the cheese she was showing and it was clear to me on first taste that these cheeses were pretty darned good but just still too young to make them as amazing as I thought they might be, given more time to mature. I asked Birgit if they had any older cheese I might taste. She apologized and said she didn't. I told her that if she could find some I'd be very interested to try it. Six months later I was shocked—in a good way—to get an email from Birgit telling me that she had those extra-aged cheeses I'd been asking about. (Unfortunately, this kind of follow-up just isn't typical of sales folks at trade shows). A week later the samples arrived as promised, and the cheeses were very seriously outstanding.

Just what I'd hoped would happen if we could get them more mature. We bought up a whole mess of this specially aged cheese. There's not a lot of it though. . .

Allgäuer Bergkäse

Made by hand using only whole raw cow's milk during the summer months when the cows are up in the mountain pastures eating from unplowed pastures. The cheese makers work with traditional animal rennet (better for flavor development than the non-animal options). Aged for us (as per that whole dialogue above) over a year, it's got a firm texture akin to a Gruyère; its flavor is forward, well balanced, very big, nutty, earthy and complex with a really long big-in-the-nose finish. You might not have known that they even had a crown to begin with, but Birgit calls it the "Crown Jewel of German Alpine cheeses." If you like big flavors and you like mountain cheeses, don't miss this one!!

Hirtenkäse

Or this one either! Aged "herdsman's cheese," is hand made from pasteurized milk that's taken from herds that are grazing in open pastures high up in the mountains, farmed (all above 2600 feet). It's flavor is nutty and rich, with a Swiss meets Parmesan flavor, more I'd say like Sbrinz from Switzerland but with a bit of that butterscotchy thing that I really love in super-aged Dutch goudas. Shave in into thin slices and eat with French Mountain bread from the Bakehouse and a good bit of cultured butter. Or eat it after dinner with slices of ripe pear.

