



**K**altbach Cave Aged Le Gruyère (AOC) and Emmentaler (AOC) are aged in the famous caves near Lucerne in Switzerland. In these caves, the healthy mineral-rich air, with a constant temperature and humidity, provides perfect conditions for high quality cheeses to mature. Sandstone has properties well suited to cheese maturation because it regulates humidity and temperature perfectly naturally.

Every month a new batch of cheeses is selected from several village cheese dairies, to spend some 300 days ageing in the kilometre-long caves.

For the first 4 weeks they are left on the shelves without being turned for a mould to form around the cheese, closely monitored by the head cheese maker and any sub-standard product is removed. Then follows the maturing process. The wheels are turned over, washed and cleaned with a special salt solution once a week.

## EMMENTALER

Emmentaler is the King of cheese according to the Swiss, so, as with all cheeses, the quality of the milk used has a direct bearing on the quality of the cheese. Switzerland enforces stringent regulations regarding animal feed, hygiene, milk quality and processing, and inspection controls. Only fresh, untreated milk from local farms is used and only grass and hay is used as fodder - silage is banned. This results in top quality raw milk, which helps to give the cheese its unique spicy flavour. It takes 12 litres of milk to produce 1 kg of cheese, and apart from some mechanisation and improved processing techniques, the art of cheese making has hardly changed in the last 100 years.

Fresh milk and fresh, natural rennet are the key to the cheesemaking process, and during the final fermentation at 19-24°C for 6-8 weeks the carbon dioxide gas produced can't escape the cheese, and so forms bubbles within it, creating the famous 'holes'. For the Kaltbach cave maturing process, only the finest cheeses are considered of the right standard by the Emmi specialists to undergo a further 8-10 months cave maturing.

The taste of Emmentaler depends on the length of time in storage. As it ages the gentle, creamy flavours mature and become more aromatic, eventually offering a rich (but dry) complexity of tastes which is highly prized.

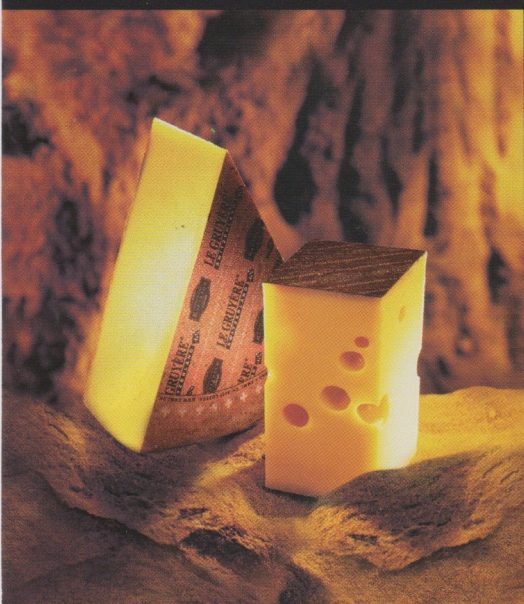
## LE GRUYÈRE

'Le Gruyère' originates from the region of the same name in the Canton of Fribourg, west of Berne. At the Nantwich International Cheese Show 2008 the Kaltbach cave-matured Le Gruyère from

Benoît and René Kolly's Fromagerie Le Mouret - one of the individual village dairies - was awarded the gold medal in the class for 'Best Swiss Cheese'. Its production is subjected to the same strict regulations as the Emmentaler: only fresh milk and no thermic treatment until its transformation into cheese, guaranteeing the preservation of the flora that give Gruyère its typical taste. The final stage of maturing will continue in the Kaltbach cellars for 12 months to create only the finest, prime quality Le Gruyère.

Le Gruyère has a wonderful, nutty, spicy flavour and is most widely used in the classic Swiss fondue - it melts deliciously - but many chefs serve it as a julienne in salads or alongside the other specialities on the cheeseboard.

During ageing, the two cheeses exude white crystals and water droplets. These 'tears of joy' are proof of their superior quality and help refine the splendid taste. The ageing in the caves gives the cheeses a natural dark patina on the rind. This is a rustic brown in the case of Kaltbach Gruyère and a black-brown in the case of Emmentaler. Having walked along the 1 km caves and seen the work and great care taken by everyone involved, it was a bonus to be invited to taste a selection of their cheeses from Fromage des Vignerons: Le Mariage des Trois Laites (goats'/sheeps'/cows' milk), Raclette, Fondue, and Gruyère and Emmentaler of differing maturing times, including the champion 12-month cheese, all tasted with some fresh bread and a good Swiss white wine. The cheeses are definitely of a great eating quality but the gold medal winner was outstanding: a full flavoured, delicious, creamy example.



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