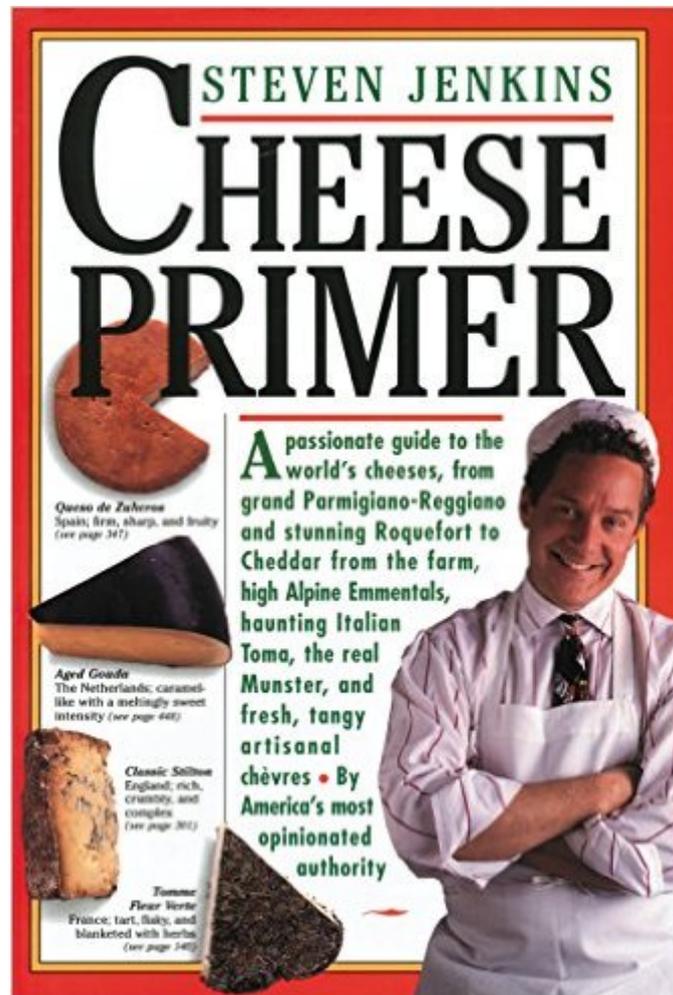


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Cheese Primer



Synopsis

Steven Jenkins is our foremost cheese authority--in the words of The New York Times, "a Broadway impresario whose hit is food." Now, after years of importing cheeses, scouring the cheese-producing areas of the world, and setting up cheese counters at gourmet food shops, he's decided to write it all down. Full of passion, knowledge, and an expert's considered opinions the cheese primer tells you everything you need to know about the hundreds of cheeses that have, in the last few years, become available in this country. Region-by-region, he covers all the major cheeses from France, Italy, Switzerland--the top tier of cheese-producing countries--plus the best of Britain, Ireland, Spain, the United States, Austria, Germany, and other countries. Along the way he tells how to pick out a healthy Pont l'Eveque; why to reconsider the noble Fontina for more than just cooking; how to avoid those factory-made chevres; why to seek out the sublime Vacherin Mont d'Or; and how to start exploring--Bleu de Bresse, Cabrales, Crottin de Chavignol, and so on. A complete primer, it includes information on the best ways to store and serve cheese, including which wines to serve alongside them; how to orchestrate a proper cheese course; and the unimportable cheeses to look up when abroad.

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Customer Reviews

'Cheese Primer' by a leading American 'fromagerie' (sic), Steven Jenkins is a typical Workman Publishing slick treatment of a subject in a relatively inexpensive trade paperback format which is great to look at and promises lots of useful information on it's subject. This, like most of Workman's

similar titles largely delivers on its promise, but it does not quite live up to its moniker as a 'Primer'. The primary reason for this is that it does live up to the promise that the author is 'America's most opinionated authority'. There is no question that Monsieur Jenkins knows his stuff. He is especially well versed on artisanal cheeses from around the world, especially in France, Italy, Spain, and the United States. In fact, one of the most salutary discoveries in this book is that the good old U. S. of A is developing a really decent artisanal cheese industry, California cows notwithstanding. The main problem with the book is that it did not answer in a good 'Cheese for Dummies' way, some of the primary questions I had about cheese. For example, there was no spiffy table giving the primary characteristics of the world's major cheeses. This is especially important as France alone, with its more than 400 named types of cheeses have dozens which fall into the same general type. This is especially important when we find that our A-list cheeses may not be available, but a differently named cheese with very similar properties is available and at a substantially reduced price. The author very accurately states that it is simply not possible to pigeon-hole all cheeses into particular types, as there is so much overlap. This is why we need a tabular presentation of cheese properties.

I worked as a cheesemonger for five years, have shopped at Mr. Jenkins counter at Fairway in NYC, and have attended American Cheese Society conferences where he has spoken. When I've heard him speak, he has always admitted that there is incorrect and out of date information in this book - it was published in 1996, and since then, some cheeses that were unavailable in the U.S., or only available in pasteurized versions have become available or additionally available in raw milk versions. For example, on p. 159, he states that Bleu d'Auvergne is only made with pasteurized milk. There are versions now that you can buy in the U.S. made with raw milk and have been for at least five years. It's not a huge problem for a casual reader that there are errors in the book - though some of them are factual, many of them are changes caused by the growth in interest in good cheese in the U.S. Availability is changeable, and we get to eat more delicious treasures because of greater interest in cheeses here in America, which includes the promotion of cheeses by Mr. Jenkins. I've heard that he's working on a second edition, but that was a couple years ago, and a revision of a work like this is certainly a long process. That being said, the picture on p. 116 *is* captioned incorrectly. The text above the picture is about Emmentaler. A wheel of Emmentaler (originally from Bern, a bulging Swiss cheese with holes produced by the action of innocuous bacteria added to the curd in production and a smooth, brushed rind) is identified as a wheel of Comte (a cheese from the Franche-Comte region of France with a few small holes, and a flat, bumpy, natural brown rind, pictured on p. 114). This is obviously an editing mistake.

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