




BÉARN & PAYS BASQUE GARANTIS



Media kit
Appendix

OSSAU-IRATY AOP
AND ITS AROMAS





Ossau-Iraty AOP
Diversity, the source
of an abundance of
flavours

1 OSSAU-IRATY AOP IS FARMSTEAD-MADE



> Typical Basque Farmstead Ossau-Iraty

In the West of the production area, Basque farmers, using the milk from their flocks, make raw milk cheeses weighing between 1.8 and 3.3 kg. These farmhouse cheeses are easily identifiable as they bear the mark of a sheep's head with its horns from a front view.

This cheese has a sharp angle and rind that varies from **yellow ochre to ash grey** depending on the conditions of the cheese cellar. The rind is always **dry** but may vary in colour. As for the paste, its colour ranges from **light yellow to ivory**. A ring under the rind can reach 1 cm and has a darker colour. These cheeses may have a few openings in the body (due to mechanical action or fermentation).

Their aromas are **robust but balanced and reminiscent of dry grass or straw** and sometimes evocative of the atmosphere in the mountain huts. Their texture is rather **firm, dry or can be slightly crumbly**, depending on their size and affinage (ripening).

Biting into the cheese reveals a **multitude of aromas and different flavour experiences**. Sometimes slightly tangy, but more often **flavours of dried fruit and nuts** (almond, hazelnut) **or herbaceous flavours** (hay, fern, etc.) sweep over the palate, not forgetting an **echo of gaminess** that is characteristic of Ossau-Iraty AOP brebis cheese.

Ossau-Iraty AOP is above all the celebration of typical characteristics: Basque, Bearnese, dairy, farmhouse or summer pasture cheese making... each "type" of Ossau-Iraty expresses unique aromas that reflect the know-how of the artisan who crafted it.



> Typical Bearnese Farmstead Ossau-Iraty

The farmstead producers from the 3 Bearnese valleys (Aspe, Ossau, Barétous), using the milk from their own flocks, make raw milk cheeses weighing from 3.8 to 6 kg, ideal for longer affinage. This cheese has rounded angles but straight edges with an **orange-coloured rind** that can become browner during long ageing periods. One of the rind's characteristics is that it's often slightly moist and sticky, similar to a washed rind cheese.

The paste varies in colour according to affinage, **beginning with a white colour and turning yellow during the process**. Just like the Basque farmstead Ossau-Iraty it has the characteristic openings of farmhouse cheese, due to mechanical action and/or fermentation.

The aroma of farmstead Ossau-Iraty from Béarn is **powerful, richly dense and noticeably gamey, slightly pungent** (sometimes with hints of moist undergrowth). The difference with most of the farmstead Ossau-Iraty cheeses made in the Basque Country lies in its texture: here we have a **smooth and pliant texture** that melts into the mouth instantly.

This special texture is accompanied by a **feeling of freshness** that sweeps over the taste buds. Then the aromas reveal themselves. To begin with, the cheese's **gamey/sheep character** rapidly gives way to more **floral and delicately fruity notes**. A hint of salt at first bite isn't an imperfection.

This product has a taste that **lingers in the mouth**, with aromas changing in a long aftertaste.



2 OSSAU-IRATY MOUNTAIN CHEESE IS MADE USING MILK FROM SHEEP GRAZING IN HIGH SUMMER PASTURES



> Mountain farmstead Ossau-Iraty

When cheese is made during the **summer months**, in the **sheep farmer's mountain huts** (cayolar or cujalas), it is called **mountain farmstead Ossau-Iraty** (fermier d'estive). This cheese, produced during transhumance, is easily identifiable: **in addition to the front view of a sheep's head** that identifies farmstead cheese, there is the **mountain summer pastures mark** (an edelweiss in a mountain).



Mountain farmstead Ossau-Iraty cheese, both Basque Country and Béarn types, have different characteristics that the most discerning cheese consumers will only recognise when tasting.

Their texture has **more body and is round, soft, buttery, melting and smooth**. They are intensely aromatic and more characterful than the Ossau-Iraty cheese made during winter or spring. A balance of freshness and full-bodiedness reveals **floral, botanical and fruity aromas** (anise, liquorice, thyme, gentian, citrus fruit, pineapple, dried hay and/or cut grass) for the freshness, with **nutty notes** (walnuts, hazelnuts) and **gamey notes** (sheep, wool, moist wool, barn) for the full-bodiedness.



The Ossau-Iraty AOP cheese range



fact box

Ossau-Iraty AOP's aromatic complexity varies with the different ripening times.

> **Young Ossau-Iraty (3 to 4 months)** has a mild **lactic and floral flavour** reminiscent of springtime with tangy notes.

> **Ossau-Iraty 6/8 months**, the optimum age of consumption, has a **more fruity flavour with nutty undertones** and good balance on the palate.

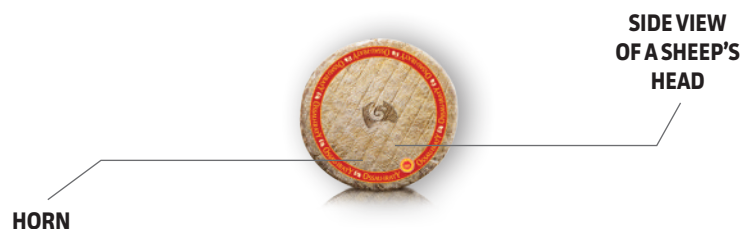
> **Aged Ossau-Iraty (> 8 months)** : has **flavours that are more pronounced** and richly persistent.



3 OSSAU-IRATY IS ALSO MADE BY CREAMERIES

> Using thermised milk

Most of the creameries make Ossau-Iraty using thermised milk. The milk **comes from several farms**.



Ossau-Iraty dairy cheese

Their rind has an even, homogenous **brown to orange colour**. Their shape is cylindrical, right-angled or with rounded angles depending on the creamery, the geographical area (Béarn or Basque Country) and size (small or large). The white paste has little or no openings and a thin breakdown under the rind. The **soft and melting texture, sometimes creamy** from certain producers has a light taste revealing a distinct gamey flavour without compromising balance. In general, cheese made with thermised milk has practically no openings of any kind (this is then called “blind paste”).

> Using raw milk

Some creameries also make Ossau-Iraty cheese using raw milk, just like the farmstead cheese makers.



Ossau-Iraty tasting lesson

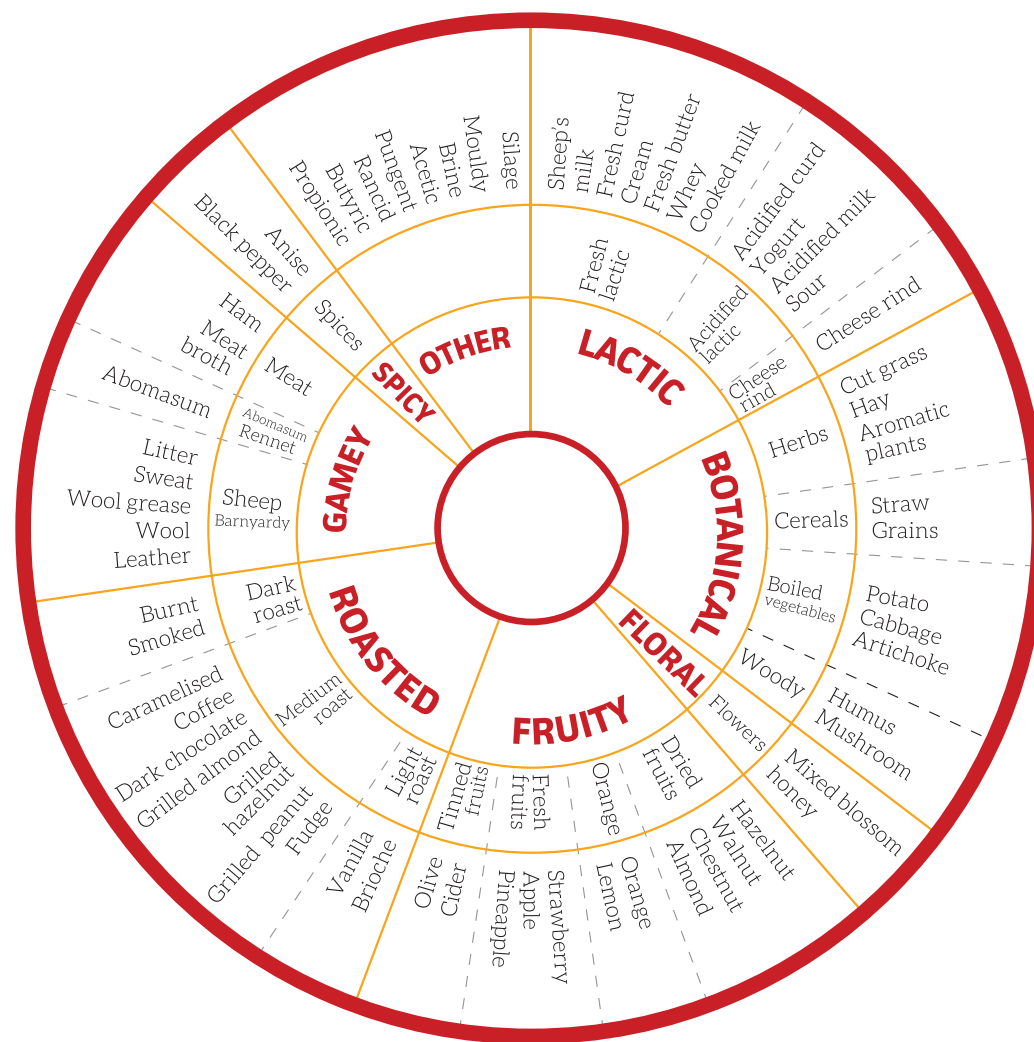
Follow these steps to learn how to taste Ossau-Iraty AOP cheese and fully appreciate all of its organoleptic qualities.

1 Sight: is the first sense that comes into play when tasting! **Looking at the visual aspect of your slice of Ossau-Iraty** is the perfect way to segue into the tasting and can provide precious indications on the **age of the cheese and where it comes from** (rind, colours...).

2 First smell: break the slice of Ossau-Iraty and immediately breathe through your nose: this technique can give you a broad grasp of all the flavours. There are several: **gamey, botanical, roasted, lactic, fruity, spicy** (cf. the aroma wheel).

3 Touch: to analyse texture. **Firmness, suppleness, roughness, softness...** By paying attention to texture, you will gather precious information about the Ossau-Iraty's typical characteristics that you are about to taste.

4 Taste: take a bite of the paste, chew and savour. Aromas and trigeminal sensations will manifest rapidly and sweep over the taste buds. The taste is also time-based, **how long the flavours linger in the mouth or the aftertaste** will fine-tune your final assessment of the product.



THE OSSAU-IRATY CHEESE AROMA WHEEL

Presents and classifies into 8 families the aromas of semi-hard and hard sheep's milk cheese.

Source: European programme FLORN

