

Cheese is a delicious snack all on its own but paired with beverages and other foods; it creates new and surprising tastes that are sure to tempt your taste buds. Although there are no set rules for pairing your favorite cheeses, there are some guidelines for combining certain flavors, textures and colors that will please both the senses and the appetite.

Soft/Fresh Cheeses

Mild, rich and creamy, soft/fresh cheeses like Mascarpone, Ricotta and Feta are great for using as a spread or dip. Pairing them with sweet treats like honey and maple syrup is a delicious contrast for these salty cheeses. Fruity, floral wines pair well with their creaminess as does the earthy flavor of green tea.

Soft-Ripened Cheeses

Soft-ripened cheeses are snowy-white and delicious at room temperature or served warm out of the oven. These cheeses, including Brie and Camembert, have an earthy, creamy flavor that pairs well with fruits like melon and berries as well as sun-dried tomatoes. Sparkling wine, Pinot Noir and beer infused with fruit, such as a cherry lager, also complement this style of cheese.

Blue-Veined Cheeses

Blue and Gorgonzola, two well-loved Blue-veined cheeses, are known for their crumbly texture and distinct flavor. Sweet and nutty accompaniments such as fruit, almonds, and spices such as ginger help balance the saltiness of these cheeses. Spicy gin, flavored beers and red wines are bold beverages that bring out Blue-Veined cheeses' intense flavors.

Semi-Soft Cheeses

Semi-soft cheeses are a smorgasbord of flavor – ranging from mild and buttery to earthy and pungent. Favorites such as Fontina, Havarti, Muenster and Monterey Jack pair well with roasted vegetables like mushrooms and asparagus as well as with sweets that include poached fruit and sugared hazelnuts. Try them with a fruity wine or good lager for the perfect sidekick.

Hispanic-Style Cheeses

Hispanic-style cheeses such as Asadero and Queso Quesadilla are rapidly gaining in popularity. Their creamy texture and tangy flavor go well with sweet accompaniments like clementines and toasted almonds as well as savory delights like spicy salsas and olives. Drink with Spanish favorites like sangria and margaritas or with a good pilsner beer for optimum flavor.

Semi-Hard Cheeses

With a wide variety of flavor profiles, Semi-Hard Cheeses are often a favorite. Cheddar, a Wisconsin classic, is rich and nutty, making it perfectly suited for foods such as fruits, including cranberries and apples. Swiss and Gruyere, two favorite Alpine-style cheeses, taste delicious with spicy pestos or rich chocolate. Cheeses such as Gouda and Edam are smooth and buttery, making them suited for the flavors of spicy nuts and peppers. Sparkling ciders and wines along with pale ales, and stout beers blend well with the diverse flavor of Semi-hard cheeses.

Hard Cheeses

Hard cheeses like Asiago, Parmesan and Romano are best matched with foods that pack an intense flavor punch. Spiced nuts, grilled vegetables, tangy vinegars and cured meats all bring out the sweet, nutty and buttery flavors of these cheeses. Paired with fruity wines like Riesling and Prosecco, Hard cheeses are definitely hard to resist.

