



A rich and varied cheese display at Orrman's Cheese Shop.



# Sharing the

## Love of Cheese

BY RACHEL VACHON

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ELAINE LAKE CHILDERS

**T**hey say the best things come in small packages. Who knows why that is? Maybe it's the anticipation of something unexpected. Maybe it's the invitation to partake in something unassuming. Or maybe it's simply that at the end of the day it's not really the size that matters, but rather the quality and

significance represented therein. Whatever the reason, we often emphasize the small over the large.

This couldn't be more perfectly illustrated than when walking through the doors of Orrman's Cheese Shop. It's an experience in all things small. From the variety of spreads and jams to the chocolate

wafers and crackers on the shelves stretching around the perimeter, Orrman's has a new surprise or hidden gem to share at every turn. And yet these delights are comparable to the appetizer before the meal.

Then there's the cheese itself—the pinnacle of the experience. Whether young or aged, mild or sharp, creamy or earthy,



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small tastes of big flavors build the curiosity. With soft cheeses on one end of the case, solid ones on the other, and goat cheese grouped in the corner, each teases and tempts with the promise of satisfaction.

"People eat with their eyes, as well, so if something looks appealing, ask for a taste," said Rachel Klebaur, the owner of Orrman's Cheese Shop.

Klebaur expressed her desire to create a place where she could share the story and process of cheesemaking, provide people with the opportunity to purchase artisanal cheeses, and educate customers about the dairy product and how to pair it with wine and beer. She has done exactly that. She shares her vast knowledge with the customers who walk through her doors to enjoy the wide range of dairy samples she has to offer.

Orrman's is more than a place to simply buy cheese. For both the novice and connoisseur alike, Klebaur gives customers the chance to sample from the array of flavors before them, and helps them gain a better understanding of North Carolina cheeses before they settle on one particular kind.

"We are happy to unwrap any of these

and give you a taste of it and figure [it] out, and maybe you can learn along the way what your palette is," Klebaur said. "We give you a taste of something we really love and maybe you don't like it, and then we can talk about what it is that you're tasting, and what it is that you find that you like about it—and what you don't like about it. Is it the texture, is it the aroma, is it the flavor, is it too salty? Then we can develop your vocabulary with you."

Klebaur plays matchmaker between customer and flavor with every sample, guiding them toward the tastes and textures that best suit them. But more than that, she loves the conversations that arise as a result.

"Food is...something to have a conversation [about]," Klebaur said. "It's about community, it's about sharing, and that's one aspect I like about it.... We want you to know what you're picking up and why it's made this way, and where it came from, and tell you about the person who made it."

*Rachel Vachon is a freelance writer based in Raleigh, NC.*



Sweetly arranged accompaniments to compliment the variety of cheeses: Nothing beats the care in arrangements and displays at small, locally owned stores with owners that love what they are sharing with others.