

Say CHEESE!

There's more to cheese than just the humble cheddar, as Florie Clerc discovered on a trip to Lewes



If you fancy something tasty on your cream crackers you should head to Lewes-based Cheese Please.

With more than 100 different cheeses, many of them local, the award-winning shop is a slice above the large chains when it comes to choice.

And it is this, the charming displays and friendly assistance that was rewarded with the acclaimed title Sussex Food Shop of the Year 2010.

Cheese fanatic Fiona Kay set the business up in 2006, her labour of love derived from her passion for cheese and the frustration she experienced when she found, save for Christmas, very little choice in the supermarkets and not much local produce besides.

"I believe cheese should be enjoyed all year round, not just at the festive season, it's part of our staple diet and extremely versatile to cook with," explains Fiona.

Fiona and her daughter Anna love nothing better than to encourage their customers to try different cheeses in everyday dishes such as macaroni cheese, Welsh rarebit or quiche lorraine.

A new tastebud makeover, ringing the changes at meal times, provides a great family and friends talking point at the dinner table.

From blues to bries, the proof of the pudding is in the eating – a carousel of flavours and colours, textures and aromas awaits you.

So when you are next in Lewes, pop in, it's a really enjoyable experience simply browsing all the varieties and sampling some of the local cheesy treasures too.

■ Feel free to email Fiona with any of your cheese-related questions to cheeseplease@btconnect.com / www.cheesepleaseonline.co.uk



FACTFILE

■ Britain has over 3,000 cheeses to choose from and the South of England boasts some of the best. In particular, Sussex has a number of dedicated speciality cheese producers.

■ It is said that the Sussex Slipcote cheese has a very long history tracing back to the time of William Shakespeare. It is a vegetarian cheese made from ewe's milk. This cheese is produced with various flavours such as plain, garlic and cracked peppercorn.

■ The quantity and quality of British cheese produced has grown markedly in recent years with Sussex dairies particularly prominent in this movement.

■ Sussex produces around 85 different local cheeses which make for a mighty fine cheeseboard when partnered with local breads and pickles.

■ Cheese has been made in Britain for

centuries. It is part of Britain's heritage with many regions having their own variety. All regional cheeses taste different due to local variances in milk type, vegetation, climate and how long the cheese is left to mature.

■ Interestingly enough, cheese saw a drop in popularity during the Renaissance, a time when it was considered unhealthy. By the 19th century, however, cheese regained its favour and production moved from the farm to the factory. Today, we consume about 640,000 tonnes of it per year.

■ What is England's favourite cheese? Most would argue it's a draw between cheddar, perhaps the most popular cheese in the world, and stilton, a blue that's long been hailed as the "King of Cheeses". But whether you're partial to a smooth, mellow cheese or one that offers a pungent piquant bite, one thing's for certain: England is home to a wonderful selection of cheeses.

SUMMER RECIPES

■ Pasta tossed in chilli oil with Not Just A Pasta Cheese shavings. Side salad of baby salad leaves with cubed Yorkshire Fine Fettle, High Weald sheep feta-style cheese or Greek feta.

■ Pasta tossed with cherry sun-dried tomatoes in oil and Rosary goat (herb) cheese, with mixed salad leaves, kalamata olives and either crumbled Buche de Chevre or finely grated cave aged Gruyère or a mature goat Gouda.

■ Broccoli and Cote Hill Blue bake with garlic baguette topped with finely grated Sussex Mansion.

■ Mixed green salad leaves, cherry sun-roasted tomatoes and toasted pine nuts tossed in sun-dried tomato oil, topped with sliced grilled local or Cypriot halloumi.