

Sure-to-please cheeses

Domaine Hudson keeps tasters coming back with weekly changes to menu of artisanal gems

By PATRICIA TALORICO

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Tom Hudson, owner of Domaine Hudson Wine Bar and Eatery in Wilmington, has established a partnership with Artisanal Cheese Shop of New York City, making him the first in Delaware to have access to the shop's vast selection.

WILMINGTON—Cheese and wine seems like a no-brainer.

But it's such a simple combination that sometimes restaurateurs forget about this perfect pairing.

When Tom Hudson opened his sophisticated Domaine Hudson Wine Bar & Eatery in 2005, his goal was to present a cheese menu that was as interesting, passionate and as smartly chosen as his wine choices.



"Wine and cheese is almost so unhip, it's ready to be back," he said.

While it's taken him a little longer than he initially hoped, Hudson partnered with Artisanal Cheese of New York City two months ago to be the first in Delaware to have access to their handcrafted selection of more than 300 cheeses.

Artisanal was founded by chef Terrance Brennan, whose New York City restaurants Picholine and Artisanal Fromagerie & Bistro helped revolutionize cheese appreciation in the United States.

Domaine Hudson, located on Washington Street, is now featuring at least 10 Artisanal cheese selections daily to go with its more than 50 wines by the glass.

"Cheese sales are now 20 percent of our food sales," Hudson said. "It's really taken off."

Hudson replaces four or five cheese selections each week -- "this is the one thing in the kitchen I'm in charge of" -- and said the cheese menu is completely different every two to three weeks.

"There's so many products out there to try," he said.

The restaurateur aims to offer a wide array of cow, goat and sheep's milk cheeses. Each serving of cheese is 1.2 ounces. A choice of any three cheeses is \$15; any five cheeses is \$25.

The current menu includes a four-year-old cow's milk gouda (pronounce it HOW-dah) from the Netherlands. The caramel-colored cheese -- so hard it's best to cut it with a steak knife -- has an almost butterscotch finish with bursts of salty flavors.

"It's like candy," the restaurateur said.

Hudson also offers Fourme d'Ambert, a rich and creamy cow's milk blue cheese from the Auvergne region of France, which has an earthy aroma and a creamy, nutty taste.

But the cheese is nowhere near as pungent as the Pont l'Eveque (pon lay-VECK), a "stinky" French cow's milk with buttery flavors.

The stinky cheeses are "very controversial. You either love them or hate them," Hudson said.

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IF YOU GO

WHAT: Domaine Hudson Wine Bar & Eatery is now offering a wide selection of handcrafted French, Spanish, Canadian, Italian and other cheeses. The cheeses, purchased from New York City's acclaimed Artisanal Cheese Shop, are served with flatbread crackers, crostini, walnuts and orange- and thyme-marinated Kalamata olives. A choice of any three cheeses is \$15; any five cheeses is \$25.

WHERE: 1314 N. Washington St., Wilmington.

CHECK THIS OUT: Pair your cheese plate with some wine. IN APRIL, taste 3-ounce pours of a featured wine for just \$3 each from 4:30 to 6 p.m. Tuesdays through Fridays.

FYI: (302) 655-9463 (655-WINE); <http://www.domainehudson.com>