

The Boston Globe

A cheese shop takes root in Salem

By Alison Arnett, Globe Correspondent
Tuesday, October 25, 2016



On an early fall day as Salem is gearing up for its usual October Halloween frenzy, Peter Endicott is standing in his sparkling 1,600-square-foot Cheese Shop of Salem, where 120 cheeses are displayed in glass temperature-controlled cases. He proudly shows off some of his favorites: Alp Blossom from Austria with mountain flowers pressed into the surface; L'Amuse Signature Gouda from the Netherlands; soft, creamy Willoughby crafted by Jasper Hill Farm in Vermont; Flory's Truckle, a Missouri cheese that's become the house cheddar. The cheese inventory is buttressed with cured meats such as jamon iberico, which Endicott says sells well despite a \$69-a-pound price tag, gourmet groceries from crackers to pickles to hot sauces, and a large and carefully curated selection of wines, beers, and ciders.

In a handsome brick building with retail spaces on the ground floor and condominiums above, the Cheese Shop fits into an increasingly vibrant city. Endicott, 60, a former contractor, was lured to Salem by Mayor Kim Driscoll, who came out to Concord Cheese Shop where he was working, seeking a good fit for Salem's burgeoning retail climate.

The Cheese Shop opened in early September 2015 (the interior design just won an American Institute of Architects People's Choice award), and Endicott has been surprised at the pace of business, especially from young professionals living in Salem. His young staff conveys the same excitement he feels about cheese — offering samples, talking about butterscotch notes and palate finish, and suggesting ideas for pairing with wines and other foods. The shop's cheesemaster/manager, the appropriately named Brie Hurd, explains that everything is cut to order and wrapped in special cheese

paper. To assure freshness, they don't keep more cheese on hand than they can sell, and each wheel is individually checked for quality when the shipment comes in. That goes for the meats and other products, including salumi from Vermont and Cloister whipped honey with ghost pepper that has been a runaway favorite. Hurd and her cheesemongers keep up an active Facebook and Twitter presence, sharing videos and enthusiastic comments about products. The wine buyer, Susan Ulbrich, seeks out unusual wines — from the country of Georgia, Tasmania, and the Czech Republic — as well as going deep into her favorite Italian vintages. Beer buyer Lauren Merritt finds local brews as well as unusual products like a Spanish natural cider. And all of them project the “celebratory vibe” that Endicott had hoped for.

As for him, it's still the love of cheese: “When I feel low energy, I get out here and sell cheese.”

Cheese Shop of Salem, 45 Lafayette St., Salem, 978-498-4820, www.thecheeseshopofsalem.com.