

C'est Cheese

216B Main St. Port Jefferson, NY 631-403-4944

Description

Selling artisanal cheese on Long Island is a tough business, but Joe Ciardullo just may succeed. He opened C'est Cheese in September with a desire to bring great cheese to Port Jefferson, but also with an awareness that he was going to have to develop a customer base.

To that end, his hip, well-appointed establishment functions not only as a cheese retailer, but as a cafe, wine-and-beer bar and coffee shop. Come in for lunch

or dinner, a midafternoon snack, an after-dinner drink. Most of the salads and sandwiches feature cheese, and any of the 100 cheeses for sale can be sampled in a cheese plate, with or without a wine pairing.



Ciardullo grew up in West Islip and attended the Culinary Institute of Long Island (then in Westbury, now in Syosset) as well as the French Culinary Institute (in Manhattan), where he studied restaurant management. He worked at Tellers in Islip and at Majors in Woodbury. But through it all, he kindled a passion for cheese -- and a passion for sharing his passion.

"I love it when someone says, 'I don't like blue cheese,'" he said. That's when he brings on the Ewe's Blue from Old Chatham Shepherding Co. in the Hudson Valley. A confirmed blue-lover might be encouraged to try the Verde Capra, an aggressive goat's-milk blue from Lombardy.

Blues have a special place in Ciardullo's heart -- he usually stocks about a dozen -- as do American farmstead cheeses. He stocks more American cheeses than French, and right now he's loving the Moses Sleeper and Harbison cheeses from Jasper Hill in Vermont. Other favorites, Epoisses from France and Beemster Classic from the Netherlands.

"Every cheese," he said, "is lovable." -- Erica Marcus (Newsday / Oct. 13, 2011)

Joe Ciardullo is the owner of C'est Cheese in Port Jefferson. (Sept. 28, 2011)