



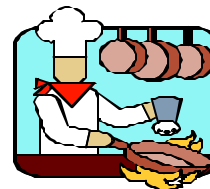
The Cheese Bite

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Notes From The Big Cheese!

Reflections



by: Noland Thuss

In this space I generally try to be cheerful or say something clever. I'm not going that route this time. Things are just getting way too serious out there in the real world for me to be glib. These are tense times. Sales are down for many of our customers and they report folks are reluctant to spend lots of money with so much uncertainty in the world.

There are challenges on every front. On the one hand, consolidation continues in the food industry. We are deeply saddened by the loss of one of our very first importers. DeChoix Specialty Foods, a family owned company from NYC, has been like family to us for almost 20 years. They closed their doors last week. Rumor has it that another large food supplier in North Carolina is up for sale. And then there's the weather! As the saying goes, the only constant is change and that seems to be happening beyond our comprehension.

We have been hustling to keep up with the effects of the closing of DeChoix. Fortunately, we no longer depend on them like we did 20 years ago. We have lots of importers to choose from. However, we wish to maintain that extra high level of quality that we could depend on from our friends at DeChoix. I guess there is a silver lining to this situation. We are discovering some new sources and even more exciting products. You will be hearing about these new items in the near future.

As world stage changes, we have to learn to roll with the punches. We are certainly getting lots of experience doing that here and I am sure you are as well. As my Mom liked to quote, "This too shall pass!"

One thing you can be sure, we will remain dedicated to bringing you the very best products possible at competitive prices. If you have any problems or concerns, please remember, you can always email me at nthuss@cornucopiacheese.com.

Cornucopia News:

Poor Harvest Pushes Up Prices on Balsamic

from the Food Institute - Prices from one of the best-know Italian specialties, Balsamic Vinegar of Modena are set to soar after the country's grape growers suffered their worst harvest in half a century. According to the AIB (Italian tasters of Balsamic Vinegar Association), the price rise will be brought on by the "the worst harvest in half a century." A dry winter, followed by a wet summer in addition to spring and summer hailstorms are the cause of the poor harvest says food.institute.com. The arrival of the 2002 crop is due to reach shelves in the spring of 2003. At that time the next price assessment will be made, but the AIB is warning consumers in advance that the crop shortage is about 60% and that the price of must's have already risen 45% -50%. Due to the current poor vintage, future price reductions are unlikely.

Chocolate, Chocolate, Our Kingdom for some Chocolate!!!!

From CCSFC --- If you are wondering why Callebaut prices are up in some cases 20%, here are some details: in a word, DeChoix. For years they had an exclusive relationship with Callebaut in Belgium. They bought mass quantities of all the various flavors of the product and at bargain basement prices. In the last few years, other distributors were able to bring in the chocolate but the formulations were not the same. Eventually, there was an upper end Callebaut product and a mid range product which some of our competitors carried. We are still carrying the high end Callebaut products but we are now buying from new importers with higher pricing.

The good news is that we have found a new chocolate from Belgium that you will be hearing about in the weeks to come. It's some of the best tasting chocolate that we have ever had AND it's significantly cheaper than Callebaut. For those who insist on our tried and true, do not despair. We have no plans to discontinue Callebaut. We are moving out our last supplies of Irca, the Italian Chocolate. If you want to get in on a great price deal, talk to your sales rep. about our limited supplies of the remaining IRCA line. It's going fast so don't delay.