

PERFECT PAIRING



# Fromage fort

Classic French whites in differing styles are the ideal match for this delicious and ingenious method for getting the best out of those leftover ends of cheese

INTRODUCED BY SILVIA BALDINI

PHOTOGRAPH: OLGA YASTREMSKA/NEW AFRICA/AFRICA STUDIO

When I married my Italian husband, my mother-in-law gifted me two binders of typed family recipes. Together with my own mother's handwritten recipes, they are my most treasured possessions and the ones I cook from the most. These faded, much-used, grease-stained pages remind me of the power of women around the table. We women, collectively, can shape the minds and bodies of future generations. When we cook, we not only nourish bellies, we also empower communities and support and advance one another's careers and dreams.

This is why I wrote *Les Dames d'Escoffier New York Cookbook: Stirring the Pot*, a collection of 76 family recipes alongside wine pairings from acclaimed sommelier Pascaline Lepeltier. The recipes are delicious and easy to cook from, because they come from some of the most talented women in the culinary world. They range from simple and ideal for any beginner home cook to more process-heavy to appeal to experienced cooks who like a challenge. Every recipe is unique and stimulating, like the Dame who contributed it.

## THE RECIPE

Contributed by Marsha Palanci, author of *Tarte Tatin Tales: Recollections and Recipes for Living the Good Life* (US\$36.69/£29 BookBaby)

French women are fundamentally frugal. So, when there's leftover cheese, they accumulate the odd bits to make a fromage fort, meaning 'strong cheese'. This is basically a cheese spread made more interesting with the addition of wine, sweet butter and shallots or garlic. As the combination changes, determined by the selection of leftover cheeses, the result is always something different. Spread on crackers or slices of baguettes, or even piped on halved cherry tomatoes, fromage fort will surprise your guests and cut down on waste, too.

Serves 6

Preparation time 20 minutes

Cooking time None

### INGREDIENTS

500g leftover pieces of cheese, to include soft, grated hard cheese, blue and goat's milk cheeses  
60g unsalted butter

## The wines to match By Fiona Beckett

As Marsha Palanci says, fromage fort can take many forms depending on the cheese – and booze – you use. I've certainly made it with the tail ends of stinky cheeses which make it quite challenging, especially if you add garlic rather than onion and hot pepper, which some recipes include. If you incorporate a blue, I agree with sommelier Pascaline Lepeltier's suggestion that a wine with a touch of sweetness like a Vouvray demi-sec can work really well, but in general I lean towards wines with a high level of acidity. Aligoté, Muscadet, Picpoul and Albariño would all do the trick, as would a Loire Sauvignon Blanc, especially if goats' cheese is dominant. I also think a strong rosé works well with a cheese spread, maybe a simple southern French rather than a high-end Provençal one. Or a Rioja rosado, if one is allowed to drink a Spanish wine with a French recipe. If you want to drink red (which would work if there's a high proportion of Cheddar or other hard cheeses), I'd go for a Bordeaux or straight Malbec. [Wine suggestions from decanter.com](#) –

Try: **Domaine Huet, Clos du Bourg Vouvray Demi-Sec, Loire 2022** 95

£40-£43.33 Millésima, The Wine Society

This producer's standout demi-sec Vouvray of 2022. Enticing honeysuckle and linden blossom aromas, silky-smooth, youthful fruit, and a light floral sweetness balanced by a precise backbone of mineral acidity that will support the wine's evolution. Altogether delicious now, this is a serious wine that will reward cellaring if you can resist pulling the cork.

Drink 2024-2045 Alc 13%



Try: **Jérôme Chézeaux, Bourgogne Aligoté, Burgundy 2021** 91

£21.95 Champagnes & Châteaux

It's easy to forget about Aligoté when it comes to Burgundy, but the grape can be a brilliant go-to when you need a good-value, crisp white with moderate alcohol, and a lively aromatic profile. The acidity will cut through the creamy cheese, the lemon peel notes providing a refreshing contrast. As well as a zesty citrus character, this has an underlying gunflint smokiness. **Drink**

2024-2027 Alc 13%



2 shallots, finely sliced or 2 cloves of garlic, finely sliced

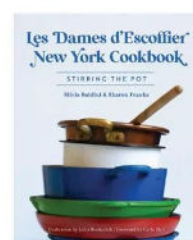
60ml dry white wine or 1 tbsp Cognac

¼ tsp freshly ground black pepper

60g pecans, chopped

### METHOD

1. Bring the cheeses and butter to room temperature.
2. Grate all the hard cheeses. Remove hard rinds and any dried-out sections. Don't worry about removing rinds of soft-ripened cheeses such as brie or camembert.
3. Put the sliced shallot or garlic in a food processor and pulse for a few seconds.
4. Add the pieces of cheese and unsalted butter, wine or Cognac and pepper, process for 30-45 seconds until the mixture is creamy. Stir in the pecans.
5. Put into a pot; refrigerate for at least one day to allow flavours to marry.



*Les Dames d'Escoffier New York Cookbook: Stirring the Pot*, co-authored by Silvia Baldini and Sharon Franke, was published in September 2023 (US\$29.99/£23.50

History Press/Arcadia). Proceeds from sales benefit Les Dames d'Escoffier New York's scholarship fund, which supports aspiring professional women in food and beverage.

Born in Turin, **Silvia Baldini** is a classically trained chef, who has worked in restaurants in London, New York City and Connecticut, including The Ritz and Ottolenghi. Her recipes and stories have been published in numerous titles including *Food & Wine*, *Saveur*, *The New York Times*, *La Cucina Italiana* and *Forbes*. **D**