

CHEESE

*A Connoisseur's Guide
to the World's Best*

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ROBIOLA FIA

(roh-bee-OH-lah FEE-ah) Cora's Robiola variation made from a combination of cow's, goat's, and sometimes sheep's milk and wrapped in fig leaves. It is aged approximately 15 days.



WINE PAIRINGS: This version of Robiola is a fairly versatile partner that is best enjoyed with young, light-bodied wines.

- **WHITE:** Beaujolais Blanc (Chardonnay);
Vouvray demi-sec (Chenin Blanc).
- **RED:** Sancerre Rouge (Pinot Noir); Sangiovese
(Brunello di Montalcino or Chianti Classico).

RATINGS QUALITY

84

STRENGTH



ROBIOLA VITE

(roh-bee-OH-lah VEE-teh) Another mixed-milk Robiola variation from Cora that comes wrapped in vine leaves and tied with thin straw bands. It has splotchy white mold covering the vine leaves, which give the cheese a subtly earthy, mildly musty accent to its flavors.



WINE PAIRINGS: Not as versatile a wine partner as some of the other Robiolas.

- **WHITE:** Pinot Blanc (Alsace).
- **SPARKLING:** California Champagne-style
cuvée.

RATINGS QUALITY

82

STRENGTH



ROBIOLA CASTAGNA

(roh-bee-OH-lah cahs-TAH-nyah) From Cora, this is a mixed-milk cheese ripened in chestnut leaves, aged 20 to 30 days. It comes in small wheels 4½ to 5½ inches in diameter and 1½ to 2 inches high, weighing about 7 ounces. The paste is white to off-white with a creamier, darker striation toward the outside or just inside the rind. It is melting toward the outside and chalky toward the center. Many of Cora's other Robiolas—Incavolata, Fia, Pineta, Vite, Noce (walnut leaves), Rosmarina (rosemary)—are essentially the same cheese with a different wrapper.



WINE PAIRINGS:

- **RED:** Barbera d'Asti; Periquita blend
(Portuguese red with Tempranillo, Syrah, and
Merlot); California Pinot Noir; southern French
Sauvignon Blanc (Languedoc).

RATINGS QUALITY

88

STRENGTH



ROBIOLA INCAVOLATA

(roh-bee-OH-lah eeh-cah-voh-LAH-tah) Another version of the Robiola Castagna from Cora, this one is matured in leaves of Savoy cabbage. Each of the different wrappings lends a subtle distinction to its flavor profile of its respective cheese—not to mention the visual appeal, which can be quite stunning.



WINE PAIRING:

- **WHITE:** Southern French Chardonnay (Pays
d'Oc).

RATINGS QUALITY

86

STRENGTH



CAPRINO NOCCETTO

(kah-PREE-noh noh-CHET-oh) This is essentially a smaller version of the Caprino Noce, except that it is made exclusively with goat's milk—a delightful, superbly balanced little delicacy selected and ripened by the exacting team of *affineurs* at Cora. As Pecorino is the diminutive name for sheep cheese, so Caprino is the same with respect to goat (*capra*). In addition, this particular cheese refers to itself on its label as a Tomino—that is, the Italian version of a small *tomme*. The Cora firm is based in Monesiglio in the province of Cuneo; their cheese selectors scour all the hills and valleys of Piedmont for the best artisan cheeses to ripen and sell throughout Italy and the rest of the cheese-loving world. Because of its small size, the influence of the black walnut leaves on this cheese is more pronounced than the Caprino Noce. The Nocchetto can pack a big nutty flavor.



TYPE: Raw goat's milk.

PROVENANCE: Piedmont, northwestern Italy.

PRODUCER: The firm of Cora selects and ripens these cheeses from among the best of the local artisanal producers.

PRODUCTION: Maximum 90 days aging.

APPEARANCE: A beautiful little package 1½ to 2 inches in diameter and the same height, weighing 50 grams (1¾ ounces), wrapped in walnut leaves with strips of raffia holding them in place.

SIMILAR CHEESES: Banon, Caprino Noce.

WINE PAIRINGS: The Caprino Nocchetto favors light-bodied, dry, crisp white wines.

☀ **WHITE:** White Bordeaux (Sauvignon Blanc); California Chardonnay; New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc; Savennières (Chenin Blanc from the Loire Valley).

🍷 **RED:** California Cabernet Sauvignon.

🍷 **DESSERT/FORTIFIED:** Moscadello di Montalcino (late-harvest Muscat from Tuscany).

RATINGS
QUALITY

86

STRENGTH

2

CAPRINO NOCE

(kah-PREE-noh NOH-cheh) The term *caprino* encompasses a fairly broad category of charming little goat's milk cheeses from the mountains of northwestern and southern Italy. While not nearly as well known or widespread as the French *chèvres*, they are certainly worthy of investigation. *Caprino* cheeses are sold either fresh, briefly aged (1 or 2 weeks), or aged 1 to 3 months. Some of them are sprinkled with herbs, spices, or vegetal ash; but this is one of my favorites, and it requires no such manipulation. Young Caprino Noce is wrapped in walnut leaves and allowed to ripen sufficiently to acquire pleasing and distinct flavors; a well-aged example is straightforward, soft, moist, and edible right through to the rind just inside the leaves. That these little gems of the Italian cheesemaking world can travel so well is a testament not only to the skilled team of *affineurs* at Cora but also to the vastly improved distribution systems in place today.



TYPE: Mixed milk: cow's, sheep's, and goat's.

PROVENANCE: The Langhe, comprising the hill country near the towns of Asti, Alessandria, and Cuneo, Piedmont, northwestern Italy.

PRODUCERS: The *stagionatura* (*affineur*) of these rustic farmhouse-style cheeses is Cora.

PRODUCTION: The recipe of walnut leaf-wrapping followed by careful aging seems to be particularly effective for cheeses of this dimension. The milk is all produced on the farms where the cheeses are made; they are selected and ripened for 20 to 30 days by the experts at Cora who travel thousands of kilometers throughout the alpine foothills and valleys of Piedmont each year to seek out and collect the best local artisanal cheeses.

APPEARANCE: Small drums 2 to 2½ inches in diameter and about 2½ inches high, weighing 5 to 6 ounces and wrapped in leaves. The paste is compact and chalky white; it ripens, from the outside in, to a smooth, melting consistency and off-white color.

SIMILAR CHEESE: Banon.

WINE PAIRINGS: Blends well with the softer, grapier reds.

🍷 **RED:** Beaujolais cru (Gamay); red Burgundy (Pinot Noir); Argentinian Malbec; Rioja (Tempranillo blend); Australian Shiraz; Chianti Classico (Sangiovese).

RATINGS
QUALITY

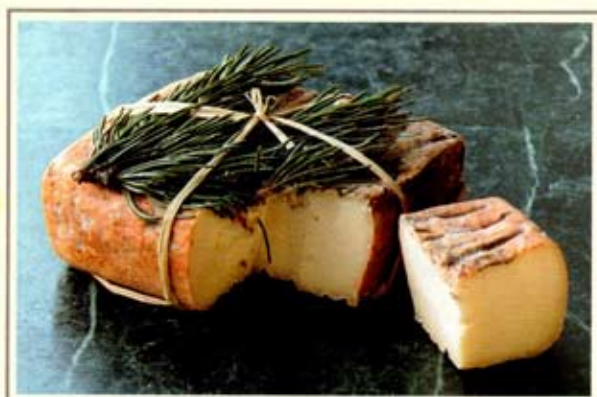
87

STRENGTH

1

ROBIOLA PINETA

(roh-bee-OH-lah pee-NEH-tah) This variation, also from Cora, more closely resembles a Lombardia or Valsassina; it's like a small Taleggio with a pine-bough adornment, a "looker" but not as highly rated in terms of taste. It is made from cow's milk, aged 40 days, and comes in a brick about 5½ inches square and 1½ inches high, weighing a bit more than 12 ounces.



WINE PAIRINGS: Better suited for medium- to full-bodied, fruity reds.

RED: Amarone della Valpolicella; Barbera d'Asti; Beaujolais (Gamay); California Merlot; Sangiovese (Brunello di Montalcino or Chianti Classico).

RATINGS

QUALITY

74

STRENGTH

2