

2019 Comté Scholarship Essay Question

When assisting a customer or buying Comte' PDO for a store, please explain what the most important points are and why in your opinion. Supposing you had to purchase two or three different Comte's for resale, how would you go about selecting them?

Boy howdy! The essay question almost immediately disqualifies me from ever visiting France. My first experience with Comte' was actually last winter. The grocery chain I work for sent me not one, but eight Comte' wedges all at once. Considering I had no idea they were coming, I had to introduce myself to Comte' quickly. I'm not afraid to admit all I don't know and because I was told to just market it as French Gruyere, I called a CCP (I wasn't a CCP yet) to get better ways to market it than to call it French Gruyere.

When it comes to Comte', I knew it was a PDO cheese. Which really means Comte' has a wonderful story and history I can tell my customers. Because my supplier will only send me ONE variety of Comte' when I order it, I have to know the "story" of the cheese. In Omaha, Ne. if my customer has even heard of Comte', I must know the cheese so that price point is not their only reason for choosing to enjoy Comte'. Most of my customers know Gruyere even if they have no idea how to pronounce it. I don't want to send them home with French Gruyere.

If I want to purchase two or three Comte's, I will have to visit another store or more than likely, visit cheese shops on one of the coasts. I cannot by any means other than reading and research tell anyone how to select a specific Comte' at this time. How amazing it would be if I could.

I'm a story teller. I romanticize my cheese and each cheese has an amazing story to tell. I want to be able tell folks about the Jura mountains and the passionate people that continue to make Comte'. I want to answer your essay question better. I want to help the 15 CCPs Hy Vee currently has make Comte' a cheese our customers take home. I want to be able to tell our corporate cheese buyer, "we need more choices and here's why."

There is no smoke I can blow to proclaim my Comte' expertise. If I do win this scholarship, I do know I can bring back from France a story to tell that will that will proclaim Comte' for what it is. No one at Hy Vee will ever market French Gruyere again.

Thank you for your consideration. I actually kind of had a ball composing this weak attempt to broaden my cheese horizons.

Lee Anderson, ACS, CCP