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NORTHERN CALIFORNIA'S LARGEST NEWSPAPER



LITTLE TO FAULT ABOUT TRUFFLE TREMOR — Cypress Grove, the Humboldt County goat-cheese producer that makes the wildly successful Humboldt Fog, celebrates its 25th anniversary in business this year. And with that milestone comes a new product from this creative enterprise, a truffled goat cheese christened Truffle Tremor.

If for nothing else, Cypress Grove's Mary Keehn deserves applause for her determination to give her cheeses names that owe nothing to Europe and everything to their own terroir. "A lot of people wanted us to link to Humboldt Fog," says Keehn of her struggles to find a name for her newest cheese. "But (Truffle Tremor) is such a different cheese, I just didn't feel like that was fair."

The initial concept for Truffle Tremor involved flavoring fresh goat cheese with truffles, but Keehn thought the truffle overpowered

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the young cheese. "To balance, it needed the complexity of a ripened cheese," says Keehn, who now matures the 3-pound Truffle Tremor for about three weeks before release. To introduce the namesake aroma, she tried a variety of truffle products, including truffle oil, before settling on a canned grated black truffle from Italy.

Truffle Tremor has a bloomy rind like Humboldt Fog and a dense, yet slightly fluffy interior dusted with tiny specks of black truffle. The cheese is translucent just under the rind, the result of enzymes breaking down the milk protein, with the unmistakable earthy aroma of truffles. On the tongue, the cheese is creamy and lush, finishing with a tang and noticeable salt. To my taste, the truffle presence is over the top, but retailers have raved about this cheese to me and say their customers are raving, too.

A wedge of Truffle Tremor would add glamour to a Valentine's Day dinner and provide another excuse to uncork a sparkling wine. On another occasion, melt a nugget of Truffle Tremor on top of creamy polenta, or make grilled panini with it. Cut into small squares, these dressed-up grilled cheese sandwiches would complement any aperitif.

Janet Fletcher is a Chronicle staff writer.

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