



## MACCALLUM HOUSE'S ALAN KANTOR IS HELPING TO SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT NORTH COAST CALIFORNIA CHEESES AND OTHER SPECIALTY INGREDIENTS

# STORY TELLING

Alan Kantor is a man who knows he's been blessed. The chef-owner of MacCallum House Restaurant in Mendocino, CA, has unparalleled access to a wealth of quality local ingredients, from organic fruits and vegetables to artisan cow cheeses. And the menu at MacCallum House celebrates this in every way.

"I'm committed to using North Coast regional products," explains Kantor, who purchased the historic restaurant in 1997 after having worked there for a number of years. "With all the great restaurants around here, it really helps to have a story to tell with the ingredients you use."

The tale of local cheeses is particularly rich and varied. "There are so many more varieties of cheese available now than there were just five or six years ago," Kantor says. "I keep finding wonderful new things."

But this chef doesn't want to keep the finds to himself—Kantor believes in paying tribute to all of his purveyors. His seasonal menu includes descriptions of specialty ingredients in use, and the waitstaff is thoroughly briefed to answer questions and share information. A map in the entry hall of the restaurant pinpoints local producers and their products, and the MacCallum House website features profiles and links. "Customers really appreciate knowing where their food comes from," he explains. "It adds a whole new dimension to the dining experience."

Kantor's first discovery was Monterey Jack and other products from Vella Cheese Co. (800-848-0505), one of the oldest cheesemaking concerns in the Sonoma Valley. "Their Dry Jack is the closest thing in the U.S. to imported Parmesan," says Kantor, "but it's got a nuttier flavor and a little more moisture, which makes it more versatile." Kantor often uses the cheese shaved onto salads or grated in pasta and risotto,



DUCK CONFIT WITH GRILLED CORN, VELLA SOFT JACK CHEESE, AND ROASTED GREEN CHILE SALSA

and he's paired the Soft Jack with duck confit for a flavorful signature.

Original Blue from Point Reyes Farmstead Cheese Company (800-591-6878) appears on the current menu in a side dish of Blue Cheese and horseradish mashed potatoes paired with Kantor's popular Niman Ranch steak with Zinfandel black pepper reduction. About a year ago, Kantor fell in love with Crescenza, a rich, semi-soft cheese from Bellwether Farms (888-527-8606) in Valley Ford, which plays a starring role in a Grilled Fig and Applewood Smoked Bacon Pizzetta on the appetizer menu.

"I like to use all of these cheeses in as many ways as possible," notes Kantor, "not just on their own or as part of a cheese plate, but in recipes that highlight their wonderful characteristics."

Ahh, the power of Cheese.™