



## If you say cheese you've said a mouthful at Corrieri's

*By Danny Solomon Bonvissuto,*  
August 18, 2006

Five minutes with Inga at Corrieri's Formaggeria almost changed the course of my career.

All fresh-faced and college-bound, Inga was only halfway through an animated description of the La Capra panini before I started mentally writing my resignation.

*... and effective immediately I will leave my post at The City Paper to pursue my dream of becoming a cheese sommelier. Please forward my final paycheck to the streets, which is where I will be glad to make my home while I heed the call of the work for which I was born.*

But back to Inga. It was almost like a 1-900 call: I was paying, she was talking and the whole thing was so incredibly sexy — in a food porn kind of way.

"You absolutely have to have it," she breathed. "Atop two thick slices of our house-baked foccacia we spread a gorgeous goat cheese then top it with roasted red and yellow peppers and finish it [she paused here for dramatic effect] with a drizzle of honey."

Here's me, nodding.

Cheese itself is sexy. Especially Italian cheeses, they're the Fabio of the cheese world. Names like Taleggio, Asiago, Fontina, Ricotta, Fontina — just the way they sound coming out of your mouth is delicious. Are they hard or soft? Better with crackers, or maybe a nice, crusty loaf? Then there are the prosciuttos and salamis wanting to go along for the ride.

Overwhelmed and hopped up on a Parmesan sample from the counter, I asked Inga to concoct an antipasto tray, keep it around \$25, and the wheels in her head began to spin.

If you've never been and if you're Italian, enjoy Italian food, or have seen *Goodfellas* more than twice, Corrieri's (say it with me: core-e-air-e's for-mahg-ah-re-ah) is going to feel like Grandma's cellar.

Set just behind Mafiaoza's on 12th Avenue in a renovated house, Corrieri's is half deli and half specialty market. It's imported meats and cheeses are up front along with freshly-made pastas and a panini machine that presses seven different kinds of

sandwiches. There are also two soups a day in the fall and winter and a case for drinks and homemade dips including tapenade and an unabashedly garlicky white bean hummus.

I must also make mention of what I can only describe as Jesus in a bowl: a Reggiano-Parmesan cold cheese dip that boasts sour cream as one of the only ingredients that isn't cheese. I am ashamed, and a little giddy, to report I ate an entire container at my desk one afternoon. In six years, when I've exercised enough to work half of it off, I'll be back for more.

A few tables for snacking lead the way into the market section, where you can find that \$8 bottle of spaghetti sauce you've been looking for. I bought two and served it to a woman who poo-pooes Ragu and makes giant cauldrons of her own from a family recipe. It was smiles all around, which has more than a little bit to do with Corrieri's hand-crafted rigatoni I served it with.

Past the cans of clams, bloody mary mixes, jars of olives and chocolates is a freezer case full of things owner Brett Corrieri uses for the catering arm of the formaggeria: foie gras, satay and Italian sausages plus ravioli including the Nuovo brand raviolini. We chose the black truffle and crème, sautéed them up with butter and bread crumbs, and snacked on those along with our antipasto at home.

The result of a research trip to Mario Batali's Otto pizzeria in New York, Corrieri, a New England native, fell in love with his build-your-own antipasto bar. After he married a "beautiful Southern belle" and decided he wasn't going home, he parlayed his passion for all things Italian into Nashville's first formaggeria.

Adamant about leaving everything in his display case unwrapped, Corrieri delights in introducing customers to cheeses they might not otherwise order, especially the stinky ones, "If you can get it past your nose and into your mouth," he said, "it tastes good."

Corrieri's soon-to-open wine and spirits shop — which will be adjacent to Mafiaoza's on 12th Avenue — will be a great place to grab a bottle and book a private pairings party. If you don't know provolone and prosciutto cotto from bleu and bologna, it's a good place to learn one bite at a time. Dirty talk at no extra charge.

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