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Trip to New York inspires gourmet cheese shop

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Corrieri's Formaggeria on 12 South is companion to Vinea wine store



Brett Corrieri, who opened Corrieri's Formaggeria in 2005 in the 12 South district, says "I didn't realize there were so many people from the coasts here that were used to (the specialty, gourmet products we carry)." (BILLY KINGSLEY / FILE / THE TENNESSEAN)

Brett Corrieri always knew he wanted a wine shop in the building at the corner of 12th Avenue South and Caruthers Avenue; it would be the perfect accompaniment to the business he already had: Corrieri's Formaggeria.

A small shop behind Vinea, City of Wine, the formaggeria offers the finest cheeses, culinary products from European countries and takeout specialties. But the impetus for the store started with a special dining experience.

"I went on a trip with Mike (Dolan, owner of MAFIAoZA's) to New York City," Corrieri said. "We went to a place called Otto, real casual, Italian tapas bar. There were stand-up tables, meats and cheeses by the serving. We didn't have anything like that here.

"So, we started having small bites at Mafiaoza's, and the meats and cheeses really took off. There was really a pent-up demand for it."

Specializing in gourmet cheeses, the store's inventory is heavy on Italian products, others are from Spain and Portugal.

Corrieri also carries a number of American Artisanal goods and some local cheeses, like a cheddar from Philadelphia, Tenn., and a goat cheese from Waynesboro, Tenn.

"I didn't realize there were so many people from the coasts here that were used to (the specialty,

gourmet products we carry),” Corrieri said. “It’s really taken off.”

Besides the cheese, another item that brings people through the doors are the sandwiches. A 10K Lira sandwich is filled with prosciutto cotto, salame toscano, mortadella, coppa and sopressata provolone and mozzarella cheeses, spinach and peppadew peppers and stuffed in a huge chunk of foccacia. Soups are also offered, and change daily.

Aged gouda is a favorite

Although they have their favorites, Formaggeria customers usually ask managers Connie Kreunen and Brandon Fuson for their suggestions.

“Most people don’t know what they’re looking for,” Fuson said. “So I start with basic questions: what are you serving, what wine are you having, and we go from there.

“The favorite cheese everyone loves is the Piavevecchio eight-month aged cow’s milk, it’s a sister cheese to Parmesan-Reggiano ... it’s a nice substitute, it melts better, it really adds to whatever you’re cooking.

“Also, the Rembrandt aged gouda. It’s totally different that what you see in the store. It’d be great with a nice pinot.

Fuson added: “People usually want us to recommend something. (When we give them something), and they may say no or they’ll hesitate. And I’ll say ‘just try it and then say no’, and usually, they come back wanting that cheese. People appreciate the fact we don’t try to push anything on them.”