

**REAL SIMPLIFIER**

# creating a cheese plate

**THE EXPERT:** Rob Kaufelt, the owner of Murray's Cheese, in New York City.

**how much cheese do you need?**

About five different cheeses is ideal for any size gathering. Just remember that you need an ounce of each cheese for every guest. So for eight people, you're looking at 2½ pounds of cheese. Store the cheese in the refrigerator, wrapped in wax paper, then covered in plastic wrap, to lock in moisture.

**how do you plate it?**

Take the cheese out of the refrigerator about an hour before guests arrive to let it reach room temperature. Just before serving, unwrap the cheeses and place them on a slate board or a wooden cutting board clockwise from mildest to strongest. Encourage guests to sample the cheeses in this order so they don't overwhelm

their palates from the get-go. Leave about an inch of space between the cheeses and include a knife for each. (You can supplement with butter knives.) I prefer to see big blocks rather than slices, but you can carve a few pieces of each. Finally, write the names of the cheeses in chalk on the board or create toothpick signs to identify them.

**what type of wine do you serve?**

Unless you're having a wine-and-cheese party, it's fine to serve just two: a white (like Sauvignon Blanc or Riesling) to go with the milder cheeses and a red (like Pinot Noir) for the more intense cheeses. If you're serving blue cheese, make the white wine sparkling and sweet (Moscato is a good choice).



**HUNGRY FOR MORE CHEESE-PARTY IDEAS?** Scan the cheeses, or go to [realsimple.com/cheeseparty](http://realsimple.com/cheeseparty).



**ROB'S ULTIMATE CHEESE PLATE**

Variety is the spice of... cheese. Always buy a range of milk types, flavors, and textures. And don't forget the extras.

**1 | FRESH CHEESE** that's moist, creamy, and mild.  
**TRY:** chèvre or Humboldt Fog.

**2 | BLOOMY-RIND CHEESE** that's buttery, mushroomy, and decadent.  
**TRY:** Camembert, La Tur, or double-crème Brie.

**3 | SEMISOFT CHEESE** that's pliable, mellow, and earthy.  
**TRY:** Morbier, fontina, or Pyrenees Brebis.

**4 | HARD CHEESE** that's dry, savory, and caramelly.  
**TRY:** Parmigiano-Reggiano, aged Gouda, or clothbound Cheddar.

**5 | BLUE CHEESE** that's dense and pungent.  
**TRY:** Roquefort or Stilton.

**6 | ACCOMPANIMENTS**  
Don't let the cheese stand alone. Select two or three add-ons with contrasting flavors and textures. One easy way to choose: Follow the "what grows together, goes together" rule. Have a

French Brie? Spring for saucisson sec, a dry-cured French sausage.  
**TRY:** Marcona almonds, wild-boar salami, and raw honey.

**7 | CRACKERS**  
Pick one that doesn't have an overwhelming flavor and isn't flimsy. It will work with every type of cheese.  
**TRY:** Z Crackers Sea Salt & Olive Oil crackers (\$7, [murrayscheese.com](http://murrayscheese.com)).