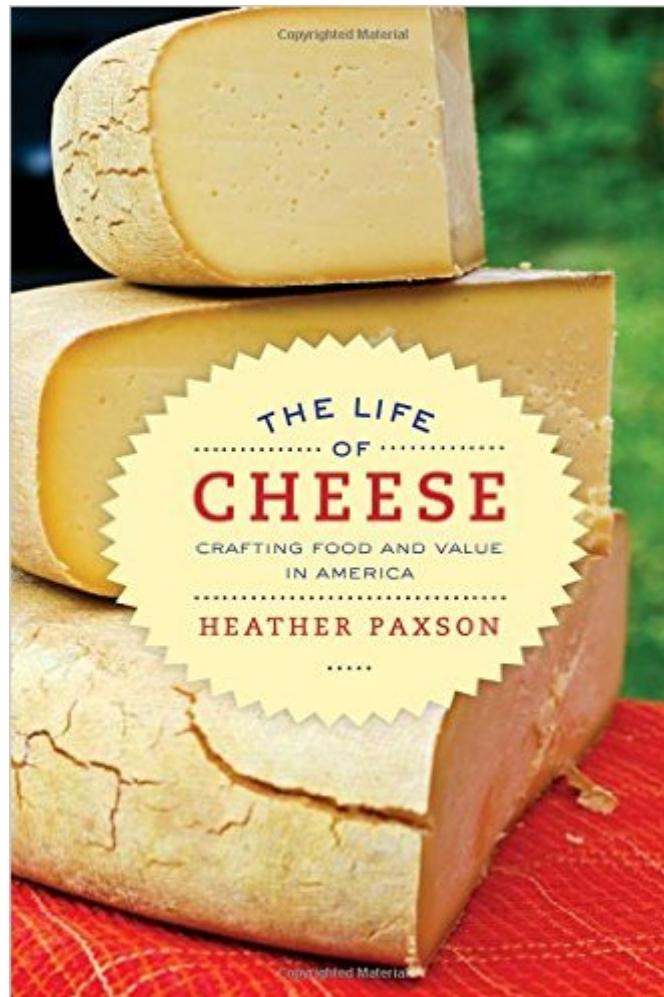


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The Life Of Cheese: Crafting Food And Value In America (California Studies In Food And Culture)



Synopsis

Cheese is alive, and alive with meaning. Heather Paxson's beautifully written anthropological study of American artisanal cheesemaking tells the story of how craftwork has become a new source of cultural and economic value for producers as well as consumers. Dairy farmers and artisans inhabit a world in which their colleagues and collaborators are a wild cast of characters, including plants, animals, microorganisms, family members, employees, and customers. As 'unfinished' commodities, living products whose qualities are not fully settled, handmade cheeses embody a mix of new and old ideas about taste and value. By exploring the life of cheese, Paxson helps rethink the politics of food, land, and labor today.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Heather Paxson's book does a great job of looking into the artisanal 'slow' food culture that has been steadily growing in the United States. The book evidently focuses on the cheese making aspect of this subculture, while also going into the particulars of the various kinds of dairy farming involved. From an anthropology perspective Paxson takes an approach of not only breaking down the process of artisanal cheese making but also looking into the lives and motivations of those involved in the trade. The diverse backgrounds of the cheese makers and farmers find a commonality by having similar motivations. These motivations span from wanting to work with animals by living a farm life to creating a sustainable business to pass onto future generations.

Ultimately Paxson's work is an entertaining read that is still able to be a valid anthropological study in subculture world of artisanal cheese making. The three different types of animals used for cheese making all require different skill sets and thus attract different character types as well. These three animals are cows, sheep, and goats. Paxson states that the dairy farmers or cheese makers have very different personalities depending on the type of animal they choose to work with. Sheep farming is more in line with those who enjoy living on the pastureland, as sheep require extensive roaming space and need to be moved frequently. Goats are for those who really enjoy working with animals, as Goats are said to be the best animals to own as they enjoy people and have unique personalities. Finally cows are said to be for those who enjoy working with machinery. Cows being the most popular form of dairy farming are also the most efficient, as they produce the largest quantities of milk and require the least amount of moving.

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