

Caseus Fromagerie & Bistro comes to New Haven

SAY cheese



The staff of Caseus with some of the cheeses available.

BLESSED ARE THE CHEESE-MAKERS.

And blessed is Jason Sobocinski, who has found, in cheese, a passport to the world.

"Every cheese has a story." That's Jason's motto, and it's the phrase firmly attached to Caseus, his newly opened bistro and cheese shop at the corner of Trumbull Street and Whitney Avenue.

There, in a subterranean space, 100 or so sharp, soft, complex and keen cheeses, each made in small batches by talented artisans from around the globe, can be purchased by the pound.

On beyond the shop, in a multilevel bistro, the same cheeses can be experienced in their moments of bliss, melted and swirled and integrated into dishes that honor the flavorsome nature of each.

Caseus is a cheese-lover's dream. But that's not all: It's also a warm, welcoming bistro, with a European-style menu offering such delights as Braised Short Ribs, cooked for six hours; a buttery Tart du Jour (mine was caramelized onion and chevre); Steak Frites, in the classic style, with house mayo and pommes frites; plus a daily cheese board, a daily charcuterie board, an Onion Soup Gratin that defines deliciousness, a

Grilled Cheese sandwich that flies on the wings of the restaurant's best melting cheeses, and more.

Fabrice Renaudin is the very French chef in the kitchen, whose distinguished career has included stints in top restaurants on the East and West coasts, notably at La Mirabelle in Manhattan. "My wife and I decided to make a break with the Big Apple," says the charming chef. He moved here last year, connected with Jason, and applied a lifetime of experience to the ingredients that Jason provided.

"I provide him with the best ingredients I can find, and he turns them into dishes that blow my mind," says Jason.

Jason is a local fellow who grew up in Fair Haven and was influenced by his grandfather and great-uncles who ran an Italian deli. He attended Providence College, where he studied marketing and film, then set off on a series of adventures that took him to Australia, Miami and New Haven, where he happily worked at Chestnut Fine Foods and started his cheese apprenticeship. In 2005, he found his way to Boston University, and enrolled in the rarefied Gastronomy program founded by Julia Child and Jacques Pepin.

"It's the study of food culture and cuisine — why people eat what they eat and how it influences their culture — it's a geographical and anthropological look at food," explains Jason.

The two-year program was, for Jason, enriched greatly by his job at Formaggio Kitchen in Cambridge, famous for its constantly evolving collection of cheeses. When it came time for Jason to produce a thesis, he decided to open a cheese shop, right here in his home town.

With the help of enthusiastic (and talented) friends and family members, Jason took over the former Haya's restaurant, stripped it to the walls, and created Caseus, which opened its doors on Dec. 30.

Though he's yet to have a grand opening, and in fact doesn't yet have a liquor license, Caseus is already a smash hit, filled nearly every night and day with delighted patrons relaxing amongst the wood and brick, teasing their tastebuds with some of the world's best cheeses and cuisines to match.



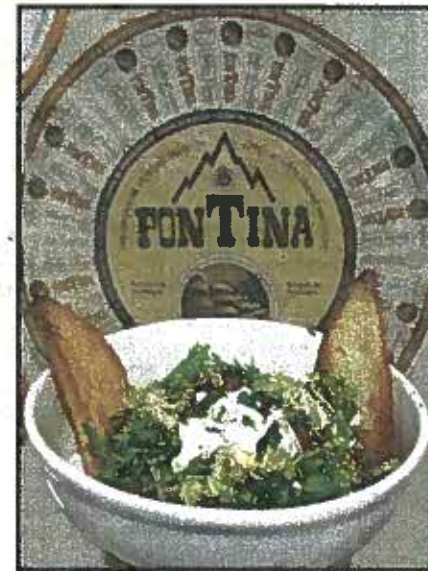
TODD LYON
DEEP DISH:
THE REAL
RESTAURANT
REPORT



Caseus, besides being a bistro, also sells various cheeses.



The exterior of Caseus, the new cheese shop on the corner of Trumbull Street and Whitney Avenue in New Haven.



Frisee Aux Lardons.

Melanie Stengel / Register photos



THE ESSENTIALS

- **Place:** Caseus Fromagerie & Bistro, 93 Whitney Ave. (at Trumbull Street), New Haven.
- **Phone:** (203) 624-3373
- **Web:** www.caseusnewhaven.com
- **Hours:** Lunch, 11:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Mondays-Saturdays; dinner, 5-9 p.m. Wednesdays-Thursdays, 5:30-10 p.m., Fridays-Saturdays.
- **Reservations:** Accepted; recommended on weekends.
- **Food:** A European-style bistro and attached cheese shop showcases the world's finest cheeses, plus marvelous, fragrant dishes by Chef Fabrice Renaudin, including what might be the best onion soup, ever. Cheese Boards and Charcuterie Boards are offered day and night (\$14 for a selection of four). At lunch and dinner, salads, soups, sandwiches and sides are joined by entrees of Steak Frites, Poulet, Roasted Chicken, Short Ribs and more. Don't skip dessert.
- **Drink:** As of this writing, Caseus lacks a liquor license; patrons are welcome to bring their own beer and wine (a \$5 corkage fee applies per bottle and per six-pack).
- **Credit cards:** MasterCard, Visa, Discover.
- **Wheelchair access:** Through the main entrance. Lower level, including cheese shop, is not accessible, but staff will accommodate every need as requested.
- **Parking:** On the street at meters, free after 7 p.m. Trumbull Street has a parking ban between 4-6 p.m.; one side of Whitney Avenue does not.



Onion Soup Gratin.



Creme Brulee, top, and Chocolate Pot De

Hanger Steak with house mayo and pommes frites.

