



# A cheesemaker with a message

Times are changing. No longer will any food enthusiast be puzzled with an offer of something that is made by pouring bacteria into it. Not only will they say a resounding yes, the follow-up selection of dishes and food may overwhelm even the inquirer. Having said that, cheese certainly takes the top slot in this line-up as a delicious dairy goodness boasting of complex flavours.

Yet, cheese as we know and see in this corner of the planet is a far cry from their place of origin. The packaged slices of Gouda, Edam, and Swiss, sitting in the brightly lit sections of the super shops are all approved with the right number of stickers and seals. But if cheese is "growing on you," this so called variety is simply bland.

It was the same predicament for A M Saadullah, CEO of Bentwood, Solid Hardwood Flooring and Furniture. His love for cheese eventually led him into cheesemaking as a hobby. Known among his friends and fellow local cheese connoisseurs as Tutu Saad, his cheesemaking endeavour has stepped into the second year as of now.

It was not a one-day decision to get into the world of cheese making. In his own words, he describes his first actual experience in authentic cheese tasting, "It was back in 1968 when I was a young commissioned air force pilot. We had to undergo survival trainings in the northern most mountainous region of remote Swat Valley in Pakistan. There I tasted a yoghurt drink for the first time, the indigenous tribal people of that place called it 'Dil-tar', literally meaning that which soothes your heart.

It was made from milk they stored in a pouch made from 'Markhor' goat's (screw

horn mountain goat) dried stomach sack. This drink had a very strong cheesy flavour, and you can say left a strong imprint on me."

As the years passed, with change in career and work, Saad finally gave time to artisan cheesemaking and has embraced this hobby as a true calling. Being an artisan cheesemaker by definition calls for the most discerning eye for quality and taste, and Saad truly lives up to that.

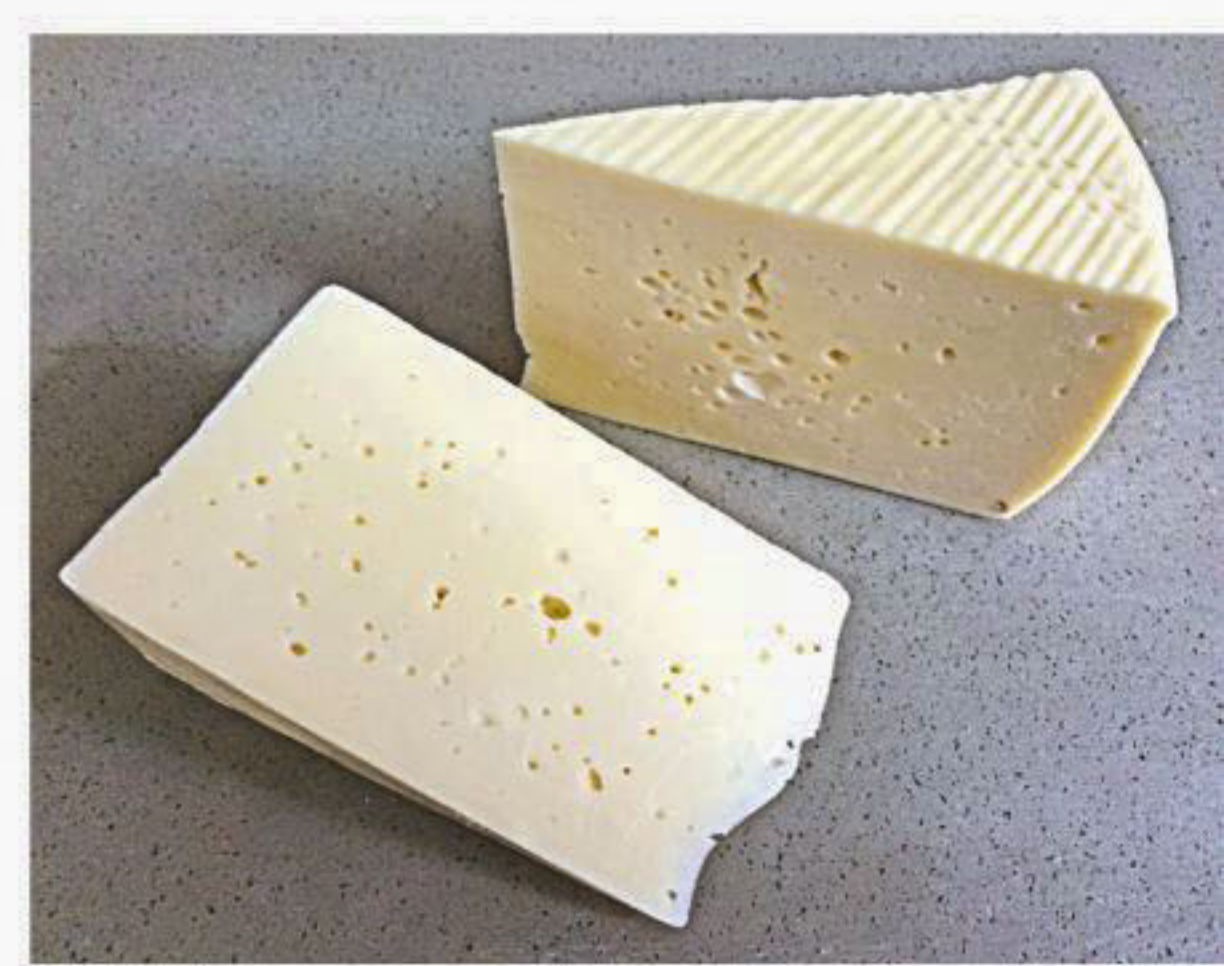
"Artisan cheesemaking is a satisfying and engrossing hobby," says Saad. "On repeated



demands from my friends and relatives, those who have tasted the cheese I make, I decided to make larger batches and make them available through my Facebook page - Tutu's Artisan Cheese."

Just a look through his page is enough to get one engrossed into the inside story of making cheese. Saad has attempted dozens of hard and soft cheese varieties from Europe and continues to grow his portfolio of cheese.

Of course it is not the cheese that attracts the connoisseur, but also how



the ingredients are sourced and how the process is undertaken. For the enzymes and bacteria culture used to coagulate the milk protein, Saad sources these from the UK as most of these are not available locally.

Saad's work in wood flooring is an immense leg-up as he is able to design and make any and all cheese making equipment — from Dutch presses for hard cheeses to custom-made moulds for cheese storing, he even has his own 'cave' made out from a refrigerator to ensure the proper environment for the cheese to mature!

That is not all, to accommodate large quantities of milk, Saad welded his own stainless stirring pot from available ones. His eye for repurposing available material into cheese making tools is itself an astounding feat.

The end result speaks for itself as cheese lovers keep returning for Saad's latest works. Then again, the end result too is temperamental as it can get. In the maker's own words, "A little change in milk temperature, not adding the exact amount of

enzyme or the active bacteria, not applying the correct pressure while making hard cheese and when seeing all these efforts resulting in a total waste of 20 litres full cream milk — these all come down as a very depressing moment for a new found hobby."

But in the end, the little accidents are overcome with the happy outcomes! Be it the extra mature Gouda, or the newly introduced Camembert, or Saad's vegetarian Dhaka Paneer, Tutu's Artisan Cheese is out to make a difference in the local cheese scene, one batch at a time.

The cheesemaker not only takes orders, but offers thoughtful and tested serving suggestions. Cheese, especially artisan ones, require an acquired taste, and Saad aspires to bring out the best tasting experience. He also prides himself as the first artisan cheesemaker in Dhaka and hopes to spread this practice among the youngsters or those looking to pursue different kinds of cheesemaking. Already, he is thinking of trying his hand in cheese making workshop, and it is certain it will be time well invested!

Whether you are a tuophile in the making, or just learning all about the cheesy goodness, do not miss out on this home grown artisan cheesemaker's aspirations.

Keep an eye on upcoming Tutu Saad's cheesemaking endeavours and visit the visual diary of this cheesemaker at [www.facebook.com/cheesyutu](http://www.facebook.com/cheesyutu).

By Iris Farina  
Photo: A M Saadullah

