



GORGEOUS GOURMET BOARDS & BOXES



*Happy Valley foodies are taking the charcuterie concept to new heights
(and showing you how you can do the same at home!)*

By Holly Riddle

A grazing table by Ahhmazing Graze

According to the New York City-based Institute of Culinary Education, “charcuterie,” derived from the French “*chair cuit*,” refers to preserved meats ranging from chorizo to pepperoni, and from prosciutto to roulades. However, while traditionally the word “charcuterie” might represent a very narrow category of foods, charcuterie boards—whether at a restaurant, bar, or store—typically offer so much more.

Beyond your basic brined, cured, dehydrated, and similar meats, charcuterie’s accompaniments and accoutrements now commonly include cheese, bread, crackers, fruits, vegetables, nuts, olives, fancy spreads, and dips, all arranged on an Instagram-worthy, aesthetically pleasing, and often themed board. Occasionally, “charcuterie board” is swapped out for “grazing board” or “cheese board,” or if the board is replaced with a convenient, easily transportable box, “grazing box.” Whatever you call it, though, the concept is the same. It’s a gorgeous array of gourmet eats, perfect for both casual snacking and holiday entertaining—and you can find these boards and boxes all over Centre County.



Heather Heverly and Sarah Ehrlich of Ahhmazing Graze

Whether you go pre-made or DIY, get your charcuterie fix

Charcuterie and grazing boards have taken over foodie-focused social media in the past few years. A simple search on any feed shows you thousands upon thousands of boards overflowing with colorful displays of tantalizing snacks, from rosettes made of meat to edible flowers tucked between tiny bowls of olives and pickles. However, anyone who’s tried to replicate one of these drool-worthy snapshots will know that putting together a stellar charcuterie board is easier said than done. Luckily, savvy local business owners can help with that.

Multiple small businesses have popped up throughout Centre County recently to offer charcuterie and grazing boards made to order. Heather Heverly and Sarah Ehrlich, co-owners of Ahhmazing Graze, offer both grazing tables for



Jen Jones helps Wegmans customers select cheeses for their charcuterie boards.

events and grazing boxes that can be picked up at various locations throughout the county, and the two have aspirations of a brick-and-mortar storefront. Charcuterie by Calsey, owned by Calsey Aughenbaugh, is a just-for-fun side gig for the full-time Realtor, but one that keeps her busy, offering custom boards and boxes for gifts, events, and tailgates.

It’s not just new businesses that are catering to Centre Countians’ charcuterie needs. Long-standing storefronts have also gotten in on the trend. You can now find a variety of boards in the Wegmans cheese department, as well as at Penn State Berkey Creamery. The latter, while not charcuterie-focused in the traditional sense,

can definitely help with your cheese needs, as James Brown, sales and marketing manager at the Creamery, explains.

“The Creamery was established more than 150-some years ago, and believe it or not, we didn’t start out in ice cream. [The Creamery] was just focused on dairy, dairy husbandry, and how to help dairy farmers in the dairy industry make dairy products. Our cheese is just as important as our ice cream,” he says.

Today, the Creamery produces ten varieties of cheddar cheese, although quite a few other cheese varieties are also available for sale there, and the Creamery offers made-to-order cheese and charcuterie board kits. Kits are highly customizable and allow customers to pick their preferred cheeses and meats, as well as an optional board; Creamery staff prepare all of the ingredients, and then customers can assemble the board at home.

At Wegmans, the staff offers even more hands-on assistance when it comes to helping customers craft their perfect charcuterie, cheese, and grazing boards.

“Our cheese department is set up with [everything you need] around us. We have specialty crackers. The deli is right next to us.



The Lion’s Choice board from the Creamery

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Jones recommends choosing a soft-ripened cheese, a hard one, and a "fun" cheese.

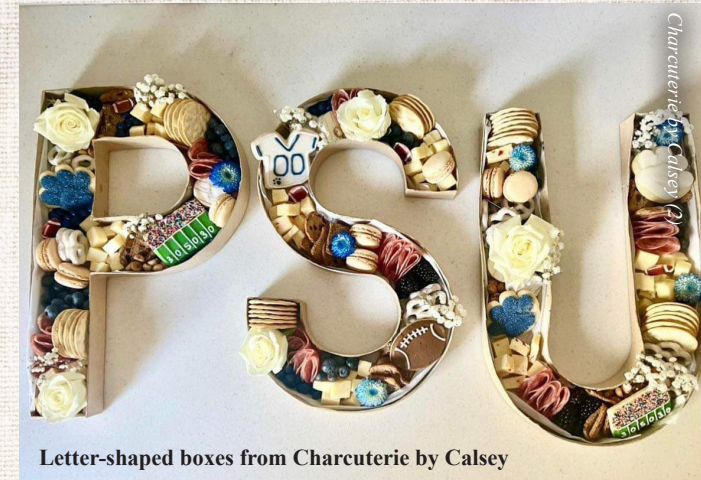
All of our cheeses are lined up," describes Jen Jones, a member of the State College Wegmans team, with nine years of experience in the store's cheese department. "So I will take the customers out and I'll walk them to the cheeses that are speaking to me that day, or if they tell me that they have likes or dislikes, I can walk them around and help them pick things out. We also have boards, as well as other utensils people might need. We really do have everything [for a charcuterie board] within twenty feet."

Don't forget food safety

Whether you purchase a ready-to-eat charcuterie board or grazing box, or you buy the ingredients from a vendor like Penn State Berkey Creamery or Wegmans to assemble your own board at home, there's one important thing to remember: food safety.

"Cut produce and cheeses need to be refrigerated until served and should not be kept at room temperature for more than two hours total, or one hour if the temperature is above 90 degrees Fahrenheit," cautions Brown. "Use clean serving utensils, spoons for dips, and tongs or toothpicks to keep guests from contaminating the entire board."

He adds, "You also want to be very mindful of the people that you're serving—if they have a wheat allergy or nut allergy, soy allergy, or what have you."



Letter-shaped boxes from Charcuterie by Calsey

Have fun and see where the trends take you

Only slightly less important than food safety? As the charcuterie aficionados who've begun their own businesses focused on all things gourmet grazing tell us, it's having fun. Heverly

and Ehrlich note, "There's not a wrong way to do it! Grab your favorites from the store and away you go!"

Certainly, there's plenty of room for creativity, as the myriad sub-trends within the charcuterie trend have shown. Both Heverly and Ehrlich, as well as Aughenbaugh, note the increasing demand for grazing boxes arranged

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in containers shaped like letters or numbers, to spell out “PSU” for a tailgate or an age for a birthday party.

Some niche their creations further.

Aughenbaugh describes a past order as one of her most unique, saying, “I did a ‘bark-uterie’ board, which was interesting, for a dog’s birthday. It was a little board and it had little treats on it ... so it looked like a charcuterie board, but it was for the dog. That was fun.”

Jones likewise recalls one of her own creative charcuterie endeavors. She says, “I bought everything at Wegmans to make a ‘Hocus Pocus’-themed charcuterie board. It was pretty cool.”

Of course, if you’re on social media, you’ll have seen recent board concepts that ditch the charcuterie altogether—such as is the case with trending butter boards. These are boards spread generously with softened butter and topped with seasonings, sliced vegetables, jams, or other tasty bits, with breads and crackers served alongside.

“We actually offered butter boards last fall, but they weren’t necessarily a hit,” comment Heverly and Ehrlich. “We’re thinking it’s a trend stemming from the West Coast and it



Calsey Aughenbaugh of Charcuterie by Calsey

hasn’t really picked up on this side of the country yet. We’re still tossing around the idea of offering them again this year. They are definitely delicious, though!”

Jones adds, “I’ve never had anyone ask me about a butter board necessarily ... but I’m all for it. We do have a nice French butter called Butter Boy. It’s creamy, flavorful, salty—the perfect base for a butter board. You can easily pair it with roasted garlic, Parmesan, or hot honey, and any of our fresh breads.”

Whatever charcuterie and grazing board trends catch your fancy, though, Jones sums up well the recent focus on these fanciful snacking and entertaining options: “Just do what makes you happy. ... The holiday season is about bringing people together and having a good time, and eating over a cheeseboard is the perfect way to catch up with friends anytime of the year.” **T&G**

Holly Riddle is a freelance writer for Town&Gown.

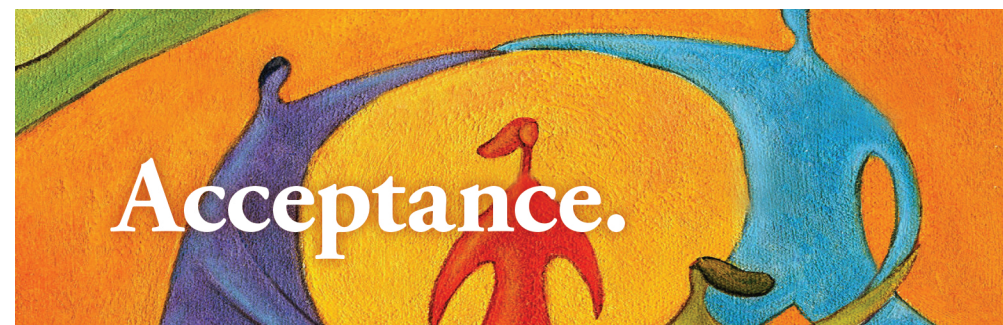


Seasonal Charcuterie by Calsey

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EXPERT TIPS FOR CRAFTING A GREAT CHARCUTERIE BOARD

Ready to head to the store, pick up your ingredients, and begin crafting your first charcuterie or grazing board? Our experts have a few tips to get you started.

1.

Focus on variety.

Jones says, “The secret to a great cheese and charcuterie board is a mixture of textures, flavors, and colors. It’s also great to choose cheeses that are made with different types of milk. My all-time favorite cheese is our eighteen-month medium gouda. It’s a beautiful orange,

so it looks perfect on any cheeseboard. You can also get creative with any garnishes or finishing touches. At the holidays specifically, put a sprig of rosemary with some dried cherries or some jam. It almost mimics the holly berry perfectly and really pops on a holiday cheese tray.”

2.

Start with three cheeses, then some meats, then your accompaniments.

Jones continues, “We always tell customers to start with a soft-ripened cheese such as our mild, medium, or intense brie. Next, choose a hard cheese, maybe like an intense cheddar or a gruyere or gouda. For the third cheese, pick a fun one with flavor or a pop of color. ... You want to have some fun on your board and you want to bring some cheeses that people are unfamiliar with, because it’s a conversation starter at your party. Next, add some meat, like San Daniele prosciutto or a Hungarian salami. The last thing is any accompaniments. Fill in

any of the holes that you might have on your tray with dried fruits, olives, nuts, or crackers.”

3.

Don’t forget the accessories!

Beyond just the various food items on your board, try adding some fun accessories, garnishes, and serving utensils, too. Heverly and Ehrlich note that they’re “big on the little additions such as gold tongs, fresh herbs for garnish, an included honey dipper, etc.”

4.

Pair your board with the right drink.

And, finally, don’t neglect the holiday libations. If you plan to add some of that Penn State Berkey Creamery cheddar to your cheese board this season, Brown notes, “[The Creamery’s] hard cheese goes well with chardonnay or cabernet, a dark lager or IPA beer, or a rye whiskey or bourbon.” **T&G**



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