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Vote online for Claremont's "Best of the Best"

They bring style to one of Claremont's favorite foods

L Lydia and Marnie Clarke, the very hip and highly personable owners of the Cheese Cave, have brought their knowledge, education and passion for cheeses, wines, chocolate and other delectable treats to the citizens of Claremont.

Lydia and Marnie Clarke moved back to Southern California from New York and Winchester, California, respectively, and decided to open the Cheese Cave when Marnie Clarke could not find a part-time job in this tough economy.

"We just always loved Claremont, even when I was in New York and Marnie was in Winchester," said Lydia. "Whenever we came home we would ask each other, 'Where should we go?' and the answer was always Claremont." The Cheese Cave is the sister's first business venture.

The highlight of the Cheese Cave is the selection of cheeses ranging from domestic farming cheeses to overseas specialty cheeses. "We want to make sure to support our domestic farmers."

As a former cheese-maker for the Winchester Cheese Company, Marnie understands the difficulty farmers and other cheese-makers go through. "Supporting them is how their cheeses end up on a restaurant's menu." Some of the specialty cheeses include: Mahon Reserva from Spain, Red Dragon from Wales and, a personal favorite, Boxing Cheddar from Australia.

On top of the selection of cheeses, the owners hope to have wine tasting and a beer list in the near future. The only thing in their way is the approval of their liquor license. "To get the liquor license, we need to have two functioning bathrooms in our store," Lydia said. "If it takes building another bathroom that is what we might have to do."

The Cheese Cave owners hope to have their liquor license approved in the next month. "We want to be able to tell our customers which cheese goes great with which wine," Lydia stated.

The Cheese Cave, despite being newly open, has already gotten a lot of positive feedback from Claremonters who have been patiently waiting for this shop to open.

"We are thrilled about the Cheese Cave, it is a wonderful addition to our community," said Rose Ash from Claremont. "I am a big cheese fan. My favorite



COURIER photos/Steven Felshundneff

Lydia Clarke, right, and her sister Marnie Clarke work behind the counter of their new business the Cheese Cave during an opening party on Monday in Claremont. The partners had an invitation only party at the Yale Avenue shop on the eve of their first day of business.



Alta Loma resident Cindy Carlburg, left, and Claremont resident Rose Ash peer into the Cheese Cave on Monday a day before the store opens for business. Both women said they love cheese and are happy that the new shop will be opening.

cheeses are goat cheese and gorgonzola." Cindy Carlburg of Altadena said, "I like how you will be able to get recommendations of cheeses."

With the support of residents the Cheese Cave's future looks bright even with the dimming economy. "These are hard times, but I think we are on an upswing. My worry is more from a worldly stand point rather than a business stand point," Lydia said.

The Cheese Cave is located at 325 N. Yale Ave. and officially opened yesterday. The hours of operation are: Tuesday to Thursday from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., Friday from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m., and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Closed on Monday.

"We are planning an official grand opening a month from now, around the 24th of July," the duo explained. "It's going to be a big celebration."

— Justin Hazelton