

Easy Cheesy:

Maximizing Profits with “Cheese Orphans”

by Jennifer Bosma



“We have customers that come in just to see what cheese orphans we have available that day.”

Jennifer Bosma

Harvest Market | Fort Bragg, CA

Annual Sales: \$25m

Difficulty: Easy

| Strategy

“We cut our own cheese in-house, which can lead to some pretty strange shapes at the ends. A couple years ago, our culinary director, Margaret Fox, wondered why we were throwing them away. Instead, we could package and sell them. Since then, we have been calling these end bits “cheese orphans,” and they have become extremely popular with our customers. In fact, the cheese orphans are so popular, we even cut some on purpose now.

We create cheese orphans from everything from hard cheeses to semi-softs and bries. We even offer cheese orphans of some of our popular local cheese options, such as Humboldt Fog, Laura Chenel, and Shamrock Artisan Goat Cheese. The cheese orphans are placed in a basket near the wine in the cheese section with a chalkboard sign in front. We also place a selection of cheese orphans next to the grab-and-go section. Instead of being thrown away, our cheese orphans have become a popular addition to local picnics and wine tastings.”

| Why it works:



FOR OUR **Shoppers**

INEXPENSIVE SAMPLE

Some of our cheeses have a higher price point when purchasing full-size pieces, so customers hate to buy one just to discover that they don't like it. Cheese orphans give them a way to sample a small, more affordable piece before they purchase the full-size option.

FUN EVENT

Customers love to mix and match their cheese orphans into a sample platter. We have customers use cheese orphans for wine pairings or for a fun family dinner.

GREAT VARIETY

Because they are so inexpensive, people are willing to take a risk and try something a little different with their cheese orphans. This is a great way to discover unexpected new favorites.

FOR OUR **Store**

ELIMINATE WASTE

When you are cutting cheese, sometimes you end up with really small pieces that would look out of place in a traditional display. With the cheese orphan basket, we are still able to sell these mini cheeses.

ATTRACTS CUSTOMERS

Our cheese orphan basket has almost become a destination in itself. We have customers that come in just to see what cheese orphans we have available that day.

LEADS TO BIGGER SALES

Lots of customers try a cheese orphan, fall in love with the cheese, and become regular buyers of full-size pieces.

Pricing

The cheese orphans are priced the same per pound as the full-sized cheeses.



BY THE **Numbers**

50

**CHEESE ORPHANS
SOLD PER DAY**

\$3-5

**PRICE PER
CHEESE ORPHAN**

STEP-BY-STEP

Tactics

- 1.** When you get to the ends of a gouda or a weird shape cheese, cut them into small pieces.
- 2.** Package and label the cheese orphans just like you would other cheese.
- 3.** Create a display that explains the concept of cheese orphans. We use a basket and a chalkboard sign.
- 4.** When customers are looking for a sample of a cheese, just direct them to the cheese orphan section. It really doesn't require any promotion, as it sells itself.

Pro Tips

Make sure that the employees in your cheese department are knowledgeable about all the cheeses, and that they are able to make recommendations about pairings.

Experiment with merchandising. We have found that placing the cheese orphans near the grab-and-go and near the wine and crackers works well. This gives customers everything they need for a quick picnic in one place!

Just because you don't end up with any odd shaped cheeses, doesn't mean you shouldn't have cheese orphans. We found that they helped us so much with sales of the full-sized cheeses, that we now purposefully cut up a few extra orphans.