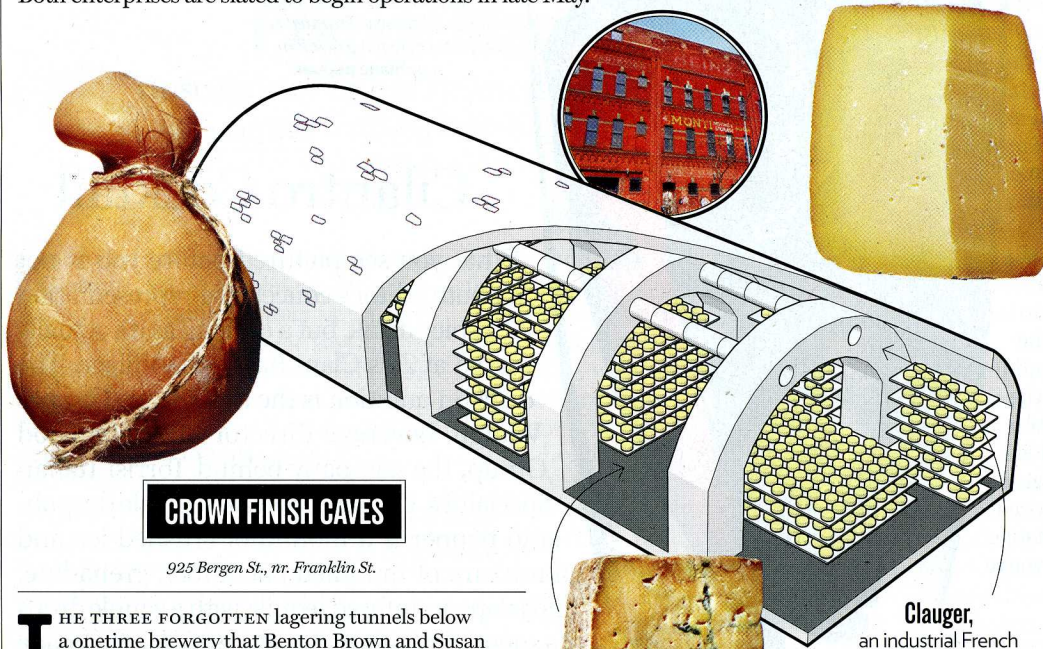


A Tasty Blueprint for Bergen Street

In Crown Heights, two neighboring commercial developments have potentially delicious consequences.

BY ROBIN RAISFELD AND ROB PATRONITE

THE CULINARY GENTRIFICATION of Crown Heights has largely been confined to the well-trod thoroughfares, spreading east, one artisanal ice-cream cone and third-wave cortado at a time, from Prospect Heights's Vanderbilt Avenue to Washington Avenue and Franklin Avenue, where it's now possible to find such basic necessities of 21st-century gourmet life as Neapolitan pizza, jerk lobster, and buttermilk-fried quail. But tucked away on a quiet quasi-industrial side street, century-old brick façades conceal two of the neighborhood's most interesting new food ventures: a beer-hall outpost of Brooklyn Flea and, right next door, a subterranean cheese cave transformed from a former brewery's old lagering tunnels. Both enterprises are slated to begin operations in late May.



925 Bergen St., nr. Franklin St.

THE THREE FORGOTTEN lagering tunnels below a onetime brewery that Benton Brown and Susan Boyle restored into a green-roofed, solar-powered complex of 30 commercial spaces and six apartments are “the last piece of the puzzle,” according to Brown. His notion to age cheese in the cellar began with an immersion course—on cheese-making with Peter Dixon, who helped launch Consider Bardwell and now operates Parish Hill Creamery in Vermont, and cheese-aging with master affineur Hervé Mons in Roanne, France. Then came the arduous task of creating the ideal environment: outfitting Tunnel No. 1 (at right), where the natural temperature hovers in the low 50s, with a poured-concrete floor and stainless-steel drains, then lime-washing the walls to seal the brick while letting it breathe. As soon as the Vermont cows are back out on pasture, Dixon will begin sending young cheeses down to Brooklyn, where up to 22,000 pounds can be stored on wood-plank shelves. For now, Brown and Boyle plan to rent out the other two tunnels to tenants with food-and-drink aspirations: growing mushrooms, lagering beer, or storing wine.



Parish Hill Creamery cheeses are made with raw milk from a neighboring farm, and include the Gorgonzola-style **West West Blue**, above; the gourd-shaped, caciocavallo-style **Suffolk Punch**, at left; and the basket-molded, Balkan-style **Kashar**, at right.

Clauger, an industrial French refrigeration and air-treatment specialist, installed a variable-speed **humidity-and-climate-control system** 30 feet below Bergen Street. **Textile ducts** run along the ceiling; conveniently, their removable covers can be tossed into the wash.

