

“Cheeses of the World”

Member Handout

You may have enjoyed a simple grilled Cheddar cheese sandwich or savored a rich and complex Stilton cheese with a crisp pear slice. Today cheeses are served breakfast through dinner, for snacks and dessert. Cheeses have been crafted for over 4,000 years and the wide varieties available now have everything to do with geography, weather and human ingenuity.

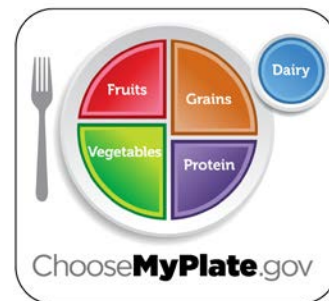
The first cheeses may have been produced before Roman times in Europe and Asia accidentally when milk was carried in the fourth or true stomach of a milk-fed calf. Rennet, an extract in that organ, acted as a curdling agent to thicken the milk. Prolonged bacterial action took the homogeneous, yogurt-like mixture to the next phase: cheese!

Milk is made of fat, water, sugar, protein and minerals. The tiny, lumpy globules of fat float to the top to form a layer of cream. The protein in milk is called casein and whey. Casein is like small clusters of tiny sponges soaked in water. “When milk is heated or mixed with salt or acids the denatured proteins” clump together. The liquid that has been forced out is called whey. The curds—mostly protein and fat are used to make cheese. Fresh curds can be eaten. The cheese can be stored and ripened. The aged cheese can be eaten over many months. Fresh cheeses are cottage or ricotta. Cheese producers can control the ripening process with enzymes and other methods to create flavors, textures and appearances for distinctive cheeses. Ripened cheeses can be aged to mild flavors or strong and sharp.

Nutrition Connection

Ask any child you know what cheese is made from the most common answer will probably be, milk! And, we all know that familiar little jingle “milk does a body good”...well so can cheese which is a product of milk, as we have just discussed. Cheese can be a part of your healthy diet and can really liven up your favorite dishes.

On ChooseMyPlate.gov, cheese fits into the Dairy group. An average person on a 2,000 calorie diet needs about 3 cups of milk, or its equivalent, a day (1.5 ounces of natural cheese or 2 ounces of processed cheese = 1 cup of milk). See ChooseMyPlate.gov for detailed nutrition information.





Examples of Cheese Types and Varieties

(Descriptions adapted from www.cheese.com)

Soft

Brie	<i>France</i>	Has a nickname "The Queen of Cheeses." One of the great dessert cheeses, comes as a wheel and is packed in a wooden box. In order to enjoy the taste fully, Brie must be served at room temperature.
Cream	<i>United States</i>	A modern, fresh cheese made of cow's milk. It is generally mild and velvety. Perfect for cheesecakes and baking.
Ricotta	<i>Italy</i>	Traditional, creamy, whey cheese made from cow's milk. It is white, creamy and mild and is primarily used as an ingredient in lasagna.

Semi-soft

Feta	<i>Greece</i>	One of the most famous cheeses in Greece. It is made in various sizes, often as a loaf-shape. Feta is solid, but crumbly with some fissures. Pure white, it has a milky fresh acidity.
Monterey Jack	<i>United States</i>	Consistency depends on its maturity; most softer varieties (common in American supermarkets) are aged for one month. Monterey Jack has a buttery, bland taste and melts easily.
Manchego	<i>Spain</i>	Produced in the La Mancha region from pasteurized sheep's milk. Has a black gray or buff colored rind with a crosshatch pattern, the interior ranges from stark white to yellowish. Has a mild, slightly briny, nutty flavor.

Firm

Cheddar	<i>England</i>	The most widely purchased and eaten cheese in the world. The color ranges from white to pale yellow to yellow-orange color. Is always made from cow's milk and has a slightly crumbly texture if properly cured.
Edam	<i>Holland</i>	This is a pressed, semi-hard to hard cheese, made from cow's milk. It comes in a shape of ball covered with distinctive red wax. Edam is produced from skimmed or semi-skimmed milk.
Jarlsberg	<i>Norway</i>	A traditional, creamery, hard, Norwegian cheese. Its flavor is more nut-like and sweeter. The paste is golden yellow with holes of various sizes. Can be used as a table cheese, dessert cheese or sandwich cheese.

Hard

Parmesan	<i>Italy</i>	Named after an area in Italy, one of the world's most popular and widely-enjoyed cheeses. Milk used for Parmesan is heated and curdled in copper containers.
Sapsago	<i>Switzerland</i>	Traditional, creamery, hard cheese made from cow's milk. Has a shape of truncated cone. Is pale green and rind less. Salty, sour and mouthwatering. Not an eating cheese but is good as a food topping and in cooking.

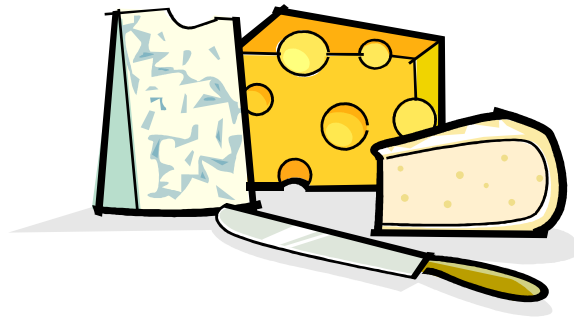
Blue-veined

Gorgonzola	<i>Italy</i>	A traditional, creamery and co-operative, blue cheese. The greenish-blue penicillin mold imparts a sharp, spicy flavor and provides an excellent contrast to the rich, creamy cheese. Excellent in salads and dips.
Stilton	<i>England</i>	Historically referred to as "The King of Cheeses" a blue-mold cheese with a rich and mellow flavor and a piquant aftertaste. It has narrow, blue-green veins and a wrinkled rind which is not edible. Excellent for crumbling over salads or as a dessert cheese.



Tasting suggestions

- Camembert & Brie (kept cold) with crackers and fruit
- Bleu cheeses with crisp pear and/or apples slices
- Cream or Neufchatel with seafood sauce, bay shrimp and crackers
- Cheese tray suggestions:
 - Select a variety of colors and shapes
 - Use easy to cut cheeses: firm, semi soft, ripened soft cheese.
 - Have a different knife for each cheese
 - Do not pre-slice cheese, it will dry out and the texture will change
 - Serve with bread rounds, crackers or sliced fruit
- Wrap a small brie round in puff pastry after it has been topped with a thin film of current jelly, marmalade or sautéed apple slices. Brush with egg wash and bake at 400°F until golden brown. Serve warm or cooled with cheese knife.
- Open faced cheese sandwich: Top a slice of your favorite toast with a thin slice of Cheddar and sliced beets. Microwave until cheese softens.
- Colorful quesadillas: Microwave or warm 2 corn or flour tortillas. Fill with grated cheese and chopped veggies like broccoli, peppers, spinach, tomatoes and zucchini. Warm it in the microwave until cheese is melted. Cut into wedges.
- Encourage veggie consumption by adding cheese, grated, crumbled or cubed to a salad.



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