

Types of Cheeses

Asiago cheese is a nutty flavored cheese that hails from Europe. It is named for a region in Italy where it was first produced. This region is known as the Asiago High Plateau, which lies within the Italian Alps.

Asiago cheese is produced in two forms as follows: fresh Asiago, also known as Pressato, and mature Asiago, which is called Asiago d'Allevato. Fresh Asiago has an off-white color and is milder in flavor than mature asiago. Mature asiago also has a more yellowish color and is somewhat grainy in texture.

Blue cheese is a general classification of cow's milk, sheep's milk, or goat's milk cheeses that have had *Penicillium* cultures added so that the final product is spotted or veined throughout with blue, blue-gray or blue-green mold, and carries a distinct smell. Some blue cheeses are injected with spores before the curds form and others have spores mixed in with the curds after they form. Blue cheese was initially produced in caves. Blue cheeses are typically aged in a temperature-controlled environment such as a cave.

The characteristic flavor of blue cheeses tends to be sharp and a bit salty. Due to this strong flavor and smell, blue cheeses are often considered an acquired taste. They can be eaten by themselves or can be crumbled or melted over foods.

Cheddar cheese originated in the village of Cheddar, England. A firm, cow's milk cheese that ranges in flavor from mild to sharp and in color from a natural white to pumpkin orange. Orange cheddars are colored with annatto, a natural dye. Canadian cheddars are smoother, creamier, and are known for their balance of flavor and sharpness. Cheddars vary in flavor depending on the length of aging and their origin. As cheddar slowly ages, it loses moisture and its texture becomes drier and more crumbly. Sharpness becomes noticeable at 12 months (old cheddar) and 18 months (extra old cheddar). The optimal aging period is 5-6 years; however, for most uses three-year-old cheese is fine and five-year-old cheddar can be saved for special occasions.

Cream cheese is considered to be a fresh type of cheese due to the fact that it is not aged. The flavor is subtle, fresh and sweet, but has a light tangy taste. At room temperature cream cheese spreads easily and has a smooth and creamy texture which makes it rich. It is made by adding cream to cow's milk which gives it richness but is not ripened, limiting its shelf life. Cream cheese is usually white in color and is available in low fat or non fat varieties.

Feta cheese is one of the oldest cheeses in the world and is said to be a product from Greece. Since October 2002 feta cheese has been formally accepted as a Greek only cheese. Feta is soft cheese, and is made from sheep milk if a mixture of sheep and goat milk. More recently cow's milk has been used. Feta is white in color, is a bit sour to the taste and rich in aroma. Even though it is a soft cheese, it is also manufactured with a partially hard texture.

Goat cheese comes in a variety of forms, although the most common is a soft, easily spread cheese. Goat cheese can also be made in hard aged varieties as well as semi firm cheeses like

feta. Goat cheese is especially common in the Middle East, Africa, and some Mediterranean countries, where the hardy goat survives in areas where cows cannot.

Goat cheese is distinctive due to the tangy flavor of goat milk. Sometimes this flavor is very strong and some consumers find it disagreeable. In some cases, the flavor is sought after, and some dairies are well known for producing particularly goaty cheese. The strong flavor is caused by hormones, which will be reduced if milk producing nanny goats are kept away from male billies. In addition, like all animal products, goat milk is heavily influenced by what the goats are eating. Because goats have hardy digestive systems, they tend to eat many bitter plants that more delicate animals such as cows and horses will not.

Swiss cheese is the general name for numerous types of cheese that were initially prepared in Switzerland. Swiss cheese is made from cow's milk, is lightly flavored, sweet and nutty. Swiss cheese is known for being glossy, light or pale yellow and having large holes in it which is a result of carbon dioxide releases during the process of maturation.

Vegetarian cheese is cheese that is not curdled with rennet, which is an enzyme that exists naturally in animal stomachs. Rennet is the popular name used by cheese makers to coagulate milk, forming curds. Most vegetarian cheeses are coagulated with plants, fungi or bacteria. There are two types of rennet in use by cheese producers: microbial and vegetarian. Microbial rennet consists of enzymes that come from either bacterial or fungal origin. Many strict vegetarians prefer to avoid cheese with this kind of rennet altogether, even though animals are not involved in any way.

There are specific plants that also have the enzymes essential to coagulate milk. Plants that have found more common use as coagulants are fig tree bark, thistle and mallow.

Information from: <http://www.idfa.org/news-views/media-kits/cheese/types-of-cheeses>