



Cheese 101

A quick count in the Ginsberg product manual will find about 150 different types of cheeses. These cheeses range from processed easy to melt cheeses, to very expensive cheeses, both domestic and imported that are prized for particular reasons, and priced accordingly.

Cheese all starts out with milk from cows, sheep or goats. The milk is curdled using an acidic substance, generally rennet, which separates the curds from the whey. This is strained and the curds are then processed for most cheeses. Whey is a very watery, high protein liquid which is used in many foods and to feed farm animals.

Historical side note: The town of Parma, in northern Italy, was first settled due to a natural abundance of salt nearby. Salt in the past was a very valuable commodity that was needed for preserving foods such as cheeses and meats. The cheese which resulted from this area is Parmigiana. The whey which was available from the cheesemaking process was fed to pigs. This became an industry in itself, producing Prosciutto di Parma.

Processed cheese was invented in Switzerland in 1911. This is when cheese is cooked, with the addition of emulsifiers, salt, sugars, colors, oils and whey. It was created so that a product could be made that would melt more smoothly and would have a longer shelf life. Kraft Foods patented the first sliced "American Cheese" in 1950.

I thought I would make up a quick list of our better cheeses, to show the reasons why they are so highly valued.

Bleu Cheeses – Made from cow's, goat's or sheep milk and have bacteria added creating a certain renowned taste. It is said that Gorgonzola is probably the earliest example of Bleu cheese, with notes as early as 879 AD describing the process. The earliest mention of Roquefort is around 1070 AD.

There are Bleu Cheeses from all around the world with differences due to salt content, type of milk origin and especially the differences in the aging process. Roquefort, for

example is from sheep milk and aged in caves in Roquefort, France for over 3 months. Gorgonzola is made in northern Italy from cow and goat milk, is aged 3-4 months and has more salt than other bleu cheeses. Stilton is a relatively new cheese, a cow's milk cheese made only made in 3 English counties and is aged just over 2 months.

Our newest cheese is Maytag Blue (note the spelling) cheese. This is a cow's milk cheese produced in Iowa, beginning in about 1940.



It is not cheap and well known nationally as a fine quality Blue Cheese. The cheese rounds are hand formed and aged in caves for at least 6 months to one year.

Swiss Cheese – These cheeses are first mentioned in writings by 1st century Roman travelers. The cheese is made using a different bacteria than other cheeses, creating pockets of air which form as the cheese ages. We carry Gruyere, which is a "blind" (no holes) Swiss cheese, as well as domestic Swiss and Finlandia Swiss cheeses. All have different characteristics, and widely different ages.



Parmesan – made from cow's milk in Northern Italy, near Parma, of course. This area became known long ago for its salt mines, enabling the farmers to produce and store good cheese, and pork products, such as Prosciutto di Parma. Parmesan, and Reggiano cheeses are aged a minimum of 12 months, producing a hard, salty cheese. It can be aged up to 3 years on some cases. Pecorino Romano is a sheep's milk cheese, generally made on the island of Sardinia, aged a minimum of 8 months.



SOFT ITALIAN CHEESES

Ricotta is a “whey” cheese not made from whole milk. It is made from cow’s whey, a byproduct of cheesemaking, and is not aged. This is used in lasagna and pasta fillings.



Marscarpone is a “triple cream” cheese made from crème fraiche with an acidic addition, such as tartaric acid or lemon juice. It is unaged and is a main ingredient in Tiramisu.

Impastata is Ricotta cheese which has been strained to create a much drier, creamier product. This is used for fillings, cannolis, and especially tall Italian cheesecakes.

Asiago – This is a cheese from Northern Italy, only legally so named if grown in a specific region. It is a cow’s milk cheese sold in a range from very soft, about 2 – 3 months age to ripened or aged 9 months to one year. Our Asiago from Stella is aged about 5 months.



Feta – Sheep and goat’s milk cheese cured in brine. It has a high fat content from 30 to 60 % milk fat in total. The liquid that it is cured and transported in a mixture of water, whey and salt. It may stay in this liquid for a very long time, over a year in general.

Mozzarella – We carry three very different types of Mozzarella and several styles in each type. Fresh Mozzarella is made quickly and stored in brine for only a short time, a few weeks at most. It has different names from its different sizes: Ciliegine – 1/3 oz, Bocconcini – 1 ½ oz and Oveline - 4 oz. Smoked Mozzarella is hand made from a shop in Pawling, NY. As a fresh cheese, Mozzarella is more drastically effected by market conditions, so the price will fluctuate dramatically over the year.

Brie – A soft cow’s milk cheese produced only in Brie, France. This cheese can have a great variation in butterfat content and age. Generally it is aged 4-5 weeks after being molded and inoculated with a very special bacteria creating an edible rind. It can be aged much longer developing a very different taste with each month of age.



Goat Cheese – A fresh cheese produced as a soft product. It is either sold in small logs or in small containers, depending on the producer. We carry a few types of goat cheese, including cheese from the Four Brother’s Farms in Amenia, NY.

Cheddar – I saved the best for last, since this is a very local and world known cheese. There are many Cheddars, from Wisconsin, New York and Vermont available in all sorts of styles and ages. The price is very dependant on the age of the cheese, as it loses much moisture over time. For instance, Cabot Private Stock Cheddar is aged 1 ½ to 2 years.



I did a search on “Types of Cheese” and the list was endless. There were probably 500 cheeses listed, including such categories as “British Cheeses”, which lists another 450. I found some great names in this list, like Pinconning, Blue Wensleydale, Cheshire, Red Leicester, Chihuahua, Gudbrandsdalsost, and so many more. There are more famous cheeses in the world than there are languages, and each carries a dear spot in national culture.

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Visit us at www.ginsbergs.com