

ST. LOUIS DISTRICT DAIRY COUNCIL



**PLEASING
PAIRINGS
WITH
CHEESE**



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No food is as luxurious or as versatile as cheese!

It's both elegant and casual, equally at home on a simple sandwich and baked in a phyllo crust.

It's delicious cubed, shredded, grated, or creamed. It's a finger food, a dip, and a sauce. All it takes is a little creativity and a few friends or family to help savor one of life's culinary treasures: cheese!

TYPES OF CHEESE

Choosing cheese

You don't have to purchase a lot of different varieties of cheese to impress guests. Just two or three types of cheese with different textures, colors, and shapes can be enough. Or choose one outstanding cheese as your focal point.

All cheese is made from milk, but different manufacturing and aging processes are used to produce the array of cheeses available today. Cheese is made by coagulating or curdling milk, stirring and heating the curd, draining off the whey (the watery part of milk), collecting and pressing the curd and, in some cases, ripening.

Cheese can be made from whole, 2% reduced-fat, 1% low-fat or fat-free (skim) milk, or combinations of these milks. Considering that it takes about 10 pounds (5 quarts) of milk to make one pound of whole milk cheese, cheese is a nutrient-dense food.

About one-third of all milk produced each year in the U.S. is used to make cheese. In 2011, 12.3 billion pounds of natural and processed cheese were produced.



All cheese can be classified into eight categories.

Blue-Veined

These gorgeous cheeses feature veins of blue to grey and offer a distinctive taste and pleasant pique on the palate.

Examples: Stilton, Roquefort, Gorgonzola and Danish blue

Hard

Hard cheeses deliver a flavor intensity beyond compare. They are easily grated and excellent choices for cooking.

Examples: Parmesan, Romano, Asiago

Semi-hard

Semi-hard cheeses have a firm texture and wide variety of flavors.

Examples: Colby, Cheddar, Edam and Gouda

Pasta Filata

These cheeses are stretchy, mild and buttery. Made from curds that are spun and stretched or kneaded into a ropy shape, these cheeses make great finger-food!

Examples: mozzarella, string, provolone

Processed

Processed cheese (also known as "cheese food") is a blend of fresh and aged natural cheese, emulsifiers, and salt. It's these added ingredients that allow it to melt smoothly and maintain a longer shelf life.

Examples: American cheese and process cheese spreads

Fresh soft

High in moisture, these cheeses are made by adding lactic acid cultures.

Examples: cottage cheese, cream cheese, Feta

Semi-soft

These cheeses are smooth on the palate, mild, rich, and creamy.

Examples: Monterey Jack, brick, Fontina, Havarti, Muenster

Soft-ripened

Soft-ripened cheeses have a bloomy, edible rind that ripens the cheese from the outside in. Bring them to room temperature before serving, warm in the oven, or serve in a puff pastry crust.

Examples: Brie and Camembert



STORING CHEESE

You can't go wrong if you follow simple storage tips:

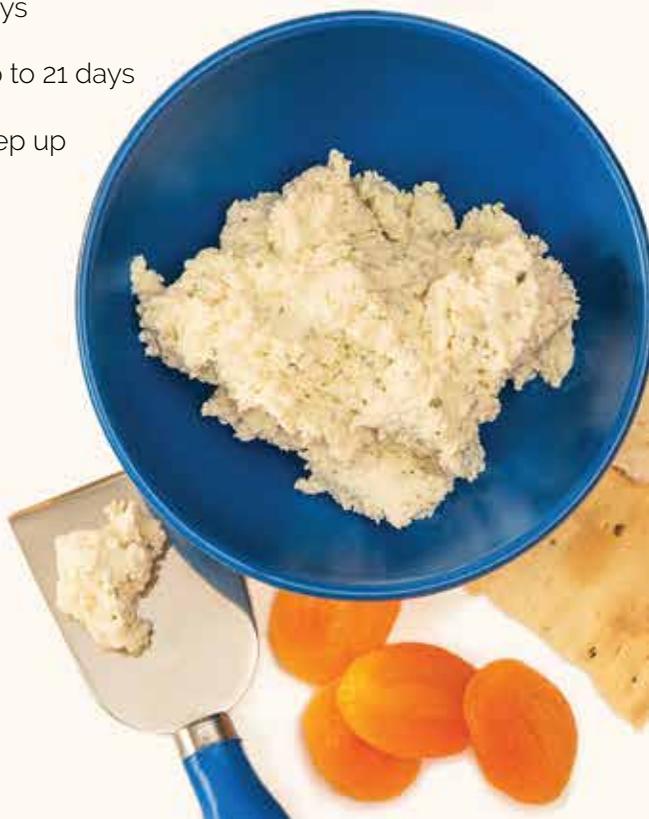
- Cheese easily absorbs other flavors so keep it away from other aromatic foods in the refrigerator.
- Refrigerate cheese between 34° and 38°F. (The vegetable crisper drawer is ideal for cheese.)
- Cheese loses flavor and moisture when exposed to air. Wrap cheese first in waxed paper, then loosely wrap in plastic wrap.
Note: Blue cheeses are the only cheeses that can be wrapped in aluminum foil.

How long will cheese keep?

Harder (lower moisture) cheeses, such as Parmesan, Romano, and Asiago, keep longer than softer (higher moisture) cheeses.

If properly stored:

- Fresh soft cheeses keep for 7-10 days
- Soft ripened cheeses keep up to 12 days
- Semi-soft cheeses will keep 14 days
- Blue cheeses keep 10-14 days
- Semi-hard cheeses keep up to 21 days
- Hard (aged) cheeses will keep up to a month or longer



CHEESE PAIRINGS

Presentation

Many varieties of cheese benefit from being brought to room temperature before serving. This brings out their unique aromas, shows off their true texture, and enhances their flavor.

When plating a cheese, let its character dictate how it is served. A firm cheese, such as Blue or Havarti, can be cut into neat wedges with a large portion left intact to give guests a sense of the whole cheese. Break cheeses such as Gouda, Parmesan and cheddar into bite-sized morsels. Allow the cheese to break along its natural lines for an intriguing texture and rustic feel. Soft-ripened cheeses are beautiful served whole, inviting guests to cut a piece according to their appetite.

Serving cheese on a large plate or cheese board in the middle of a table allows accessibility from all sides — surely a good idea as everyone digs in!

Pairings

Soft/Semi-Soft/Fresh Cheeses

Mascarpone

- Sweet
- Creamy

Pair with: Fresh seasonal fruit, a simple biscuit and local honey

Boursin

- Soft
- Smooth
- Savory

Pair with: Olives, dried apricots and rustic water crackers

Feta

- Crumbly
- Tart
- Salty

Pair with: Greek olives, roasted marinated peppers and crisp water crackers

Queso Fresco

- Simple
- Pure

Pair with: Fresh pita or tortilla wedges and colorful veggies

Havarti

- Creamy
- Buttery
- Herbaceous

Pair with: Crisp apples and pears, roasted mushrooms or asparagus, sugared hazelnuts



Soft-Ripened Cheese

Brie

Rich

Creamy

Earthy

Pair with: Chutney, dried fruit or fig jam, sun-dried tomatoes

Camembert

Intense

Creamy

Decadent

Pair with: Plain crackers or a crusty French baguette, ginger thins



Blue-Veined Cheese



Stilton

Bold

Intense

Pair with: Honey and walnuts, sugar-crusted peppered bacon

Gorgonzola

Rich

Complex

Pair with: Cranberries, cherries or apricots

Hard and Semi-Hard Cheese

Gouda

Sweet

Buttery

Pair with: Piquillo peppers, salted almonds or bits of hearty country ham

Swiss

Hearty

Nutty

Pair with: Piquillo peppers, hearty ham, spiced pistachios or spicy pesto, chocolate covered cherries

Parmesan

Salty

Nutty

Granular

Pair with: Spiced nuts, olives or cured charcuterie



Cheddar

Rich

Sharp

Peppery

Pair with: Hearty sausage or fruit, sweet and salty kettle corn, apple pie







Let's not forget the obvious. Sometimes cheese, all by itself, can be quite rewarding.



THE **Nutrition Education** People

www.stldairycouncil.org

Adapted from United Dairy Industry of Michigan