

EUROPE'S CHEESE HERITAGE



THE REPUBLIC
OF IRELAND



DENMARK



NORTHERN
IRELAND
(UNITED KINGDOM)



FRANCE



MEJERIFORENINGEN



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EUROPE'S CHEESE HERITAGE

Cheese is a universal food. That much is clear. However, it is also important to remember that this product is several thousands of years old, and characteristically European. Although other regions around the world – namely China, India, North Africa, and Central Asia – have also been consuming cheese for a long time, its place there is less prominent and the cheese culture less developed than in Europe. Historically speaking, it is here that cheese first appeared, met with great success, and became a staple food.

Europe is also where cheese's conquest of the modern world began. This is the only place in the world to witness the creation of such a wide array of varieties throughout the ages. Cheese was invented in a specific historical, anthropological, and geographical context. Despite various historical and climatic changes, it has been a constant and essential part of Europe's heritage for the last 8,000 years – and our love for the product remains irrefutable.

ONCE UPON A CHEESE

Before cheese could come into existence, humans had to find a way to harvest the milk of domesticated cows, sheep, and goats.

The first appearance of cheese is therefore inherently linked to mankind's gradual transition from hunting and gathering to agriculture during the Neolithic period (9000-3300 BC).

Initially, cheese was a milk-preservation method. The new product meant that the liquid substance could now be consumed

in solid form, outside the milk collection period, and for many months.

This preservation method called for the use of salt, which was obtained via interregional economic exchange, and, in some cases, rock-salt mining.

In order to make the new product, man also had to master the arts of maturing and aging – a task possible only within non-nomadic societies.

Cheese, which nowadays seems so commonplace, is the product of constant change and innovation; it is a complex food resulting from a skilful combination of techniques and expertise which have been carefully handed down and improved throughout the ages.

According to archaeologists, the first traces of cheese, found in excavated artefacts, were discovered in Europe.

EARLY EVIDENCE OF CHEESE PRODUCTION

Archaeological excavations unearthed the evidence, in the form of deposits on the inside of terracotta vases predating the 7th millennium BC.

It was from this moment that milk consumption gradually spread throughout Europe. Later, in the 6th and 5th millennia BC, a community of land and livestock farmers settled in a large area stretching from the Seine to the mouth of the Danube.

In Poland, fragments of punctured vases covered in milk traces were discovered in excavated dwellings dating back to 5200 BC. The vases, akin to cheese strainers, would have been used to drain curd. These are the first pieces of material evidence of European cheese-making: the first European dairy farmers were making cheese 7,000 years ago.

In the Neolithic period, the practice of cheese-making made its way to the west of the European continent – as evidenced by the traces of milk fat discovered inside Irish earthenware from the 4th millennium BC.

AT THE CORE OF OUR HERITAGE

Thanks primarily to its distinct taste and texture, cheese has been a central part of the human diet for centuries. The history of production and processing – which are conditioned by the climates, regions, landscapes and traditions of Denmark, France, the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland) – also contributed to making cheese the major foodstuff it is today.

This history is an integral part of our common food culture, as well as of our regional, national and European heritage. Cheese is still made according to ancient rules and methods. While new varieties are developed to reflect changing consumer eating habits, cheese remains a food of ancient tradition: all at once modern and deeply rooted in European history.



EUROPEAN CHEESE

TRADITION AND INNOVATION

Denmark, The Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland and France are four countries bound together by close geographical and cultural ties.

It is therefore only natural that their cheese traditions should have many common points: cheese-making in all four countries began in the prehistoric period; their traditional cheese selections are extensive; and all four are home to dynamic, modern, innovative dairy sectors, which regularly produce new cheeses and expand their networks of artisanal producers.

Today, building on age-old cheese-making traditions, the cheese industries in these countries continue to successfully adapt their selections to fit changing lifestyles and consumer tastes, all the while staying true to the values embodied by that product of great tradition and heritage.

AN ASTOUNDING ARRAY OF PRODUCTS

Due to its popularity in pre-Bronze-Age Europe, cheese was at the heart of the continent's food culture.

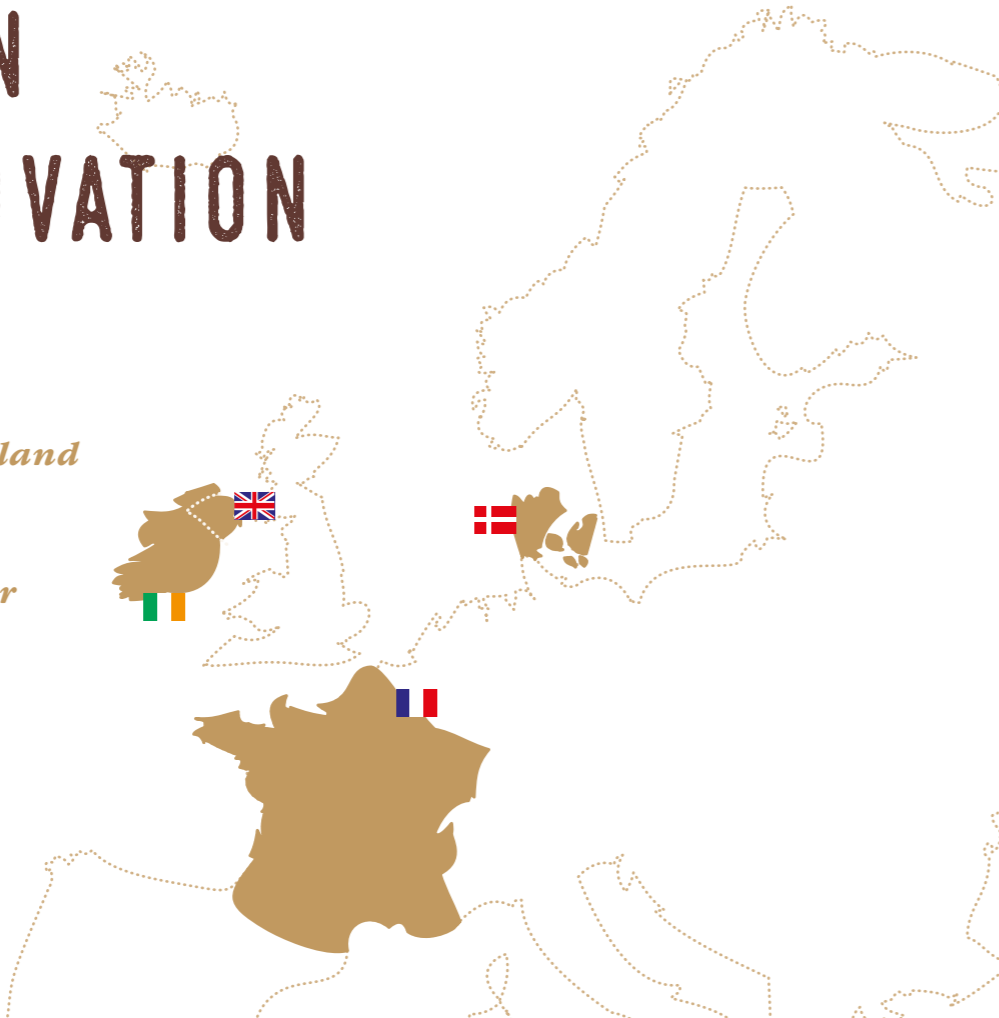
Initially a food essential to human survival, over time its unique taste made the product a beloved treat and an entrenched element in fine dining.

The function of cheese is not purely nutritional: the product is also pleasing to the taste buds, and the experience is enhanced by the sheer diversity of flavours and textures on offer. Special characteristics can depend on the country of origin, and the different seasons, ecosystems, and terroirs¹ in question. Cheese comes in an astounding array of varieties – from lowland to mountain, southern to northern.

Each variety's characteristics are determined by a combination of factors: the species of animal the milk comes from (cow, goat, sheep); terroir; livestock feed; shape and size (from the tiny goat's milk Crottin, to the giant Cheddar wheel); production methods (hard, semi-hard, soft, pressed); natural additives (penicillin for blue varieties; wine, beer, or alcohol for washed-rind varieties; herbs, dried fruit and spices), as well as the countless degrees of maturity and aging.

A large variety of cheeses has existed in Europe since the early Middle Ages. Great makers and consumers of cheese, the Benedictine, Cistercian and Trappist orders played a key role in the creation of a number of varieties.

Several cheese recipes standardised during the Middle Ages are still in use today.



90
in Northern
Ireland

183
in the Republic
of Ireland

325
in
Denmark

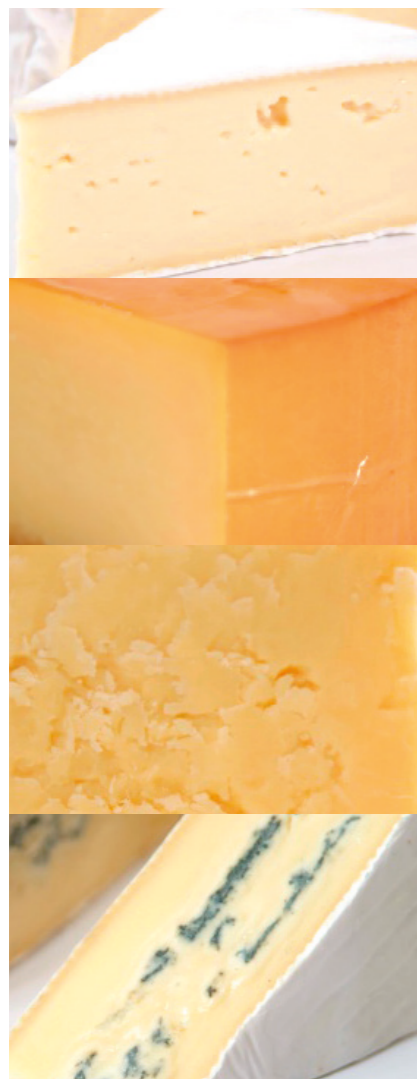
2,545
CHEESES
-
4 COUNTRIES
-
1 EUROPEAN
CULTURE

1,947
in
France

BOUNDLESS CREATIVITY

Cheese may be one of the world's oldest man-made foods, yet it is forever modern and innovative.

There are currently over 1,000 cheese varieties listed in Europe – and this number continues to grow with the introduction of new recipes and specialities concocted by the creative minds behind the continent's cheese industry. The Republic of Ireland's flavoured gouda-type cheeses, garlic or nettle-flavoured Carrowholly, and mature hard goat's milk Corleggy are just a few of Europe's many unique and original cheese creations. Northern Ireland's cheeses are just as innovative, with smoked and blue Bries, and many exciting variations on the traditional Cheddar.



Denmark's creative streak comes through in various characteristic and traditional cheese flavours. Høgelungaard blue cheese, for instance, is mild, spicy, and extremely creamy. Krondill is a small brie-type cheese rubbed with a salt-and-dill-seed mixture which gives it its unmistakable aroma.

In France, innovation takes place at both processing and farm level. Cœur-de-Massif is a new, fruity cheese made exclusively with the milk of cows from the department of Vosges. The popularity of individually wrapped, bite-sized cocktail cheeses are proof that, in order to cater for new moments of consumption, ingenuity can be applied to form as well as substance.

DIFFERENT MODES OF CONSUMPTION

In Europe, cheese enjoys varying statuses, and is eaten in a great range of ways thanks to its versatile nature.

Each region has its own flavour and texture preferences, and the product may be consumed at different times of the day from country to country: morning or evening, breakfast or dinner.

In some places, using cheese as a cooking ingredient is commonplace – but less so in others.

The product's symbolic value varies between countries. A natural extension of geography and climate, this food is also part of regional history.

Speaking about France, Charles de Gaulle asked: "how can you govern a country which has two hundred and fifty-eight varieties of cheese?", and Winston Churchill famously said that "a country producing almost 360 different types of cheese cannot die".

At that time, few French people were aware that Britain and Ireland were great cheese-producing countries and that they had at least the equivalent of that number of cheeses. They were aware of Dutch and Swiss cheeses, but what did they know of their Danish, Irish and British cousins?

On the following pages, we take a brief look at the history of cheese in selected European countries.

THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND: CHEESE RENAISSANCE

Thoroughly agricultural and heavily influenced by the monastic system, Ireland's golden age of cheese and milk started in the early Middle Ages, and ended in the mid-17th century.

Dairy in all its forms – including fresh and hard cheese, and fermented milk – was on everyone's minds, including writers. "The Vision of Mac Conglinne", an 11th-12th century satirical tale, speaks of an imaginary house whose "threshold was bare bread, and cheese-curds the sides", and whose frame was held up by "smooth pillars of old cheese".

Later, English traveller Fynes Moryson would write in "A history of Ireland from the year 1599 to 1603": "They [the Irish] feed most on white meats, and esteem for a great dainty sour curds, vulgarly called by them Bonaclabbe. And for this cause they watchfully keep their cows, and fight for them as for their religion and life; and when they are almost starved, yet they will not kill a cow, except it be old and yield no milk."



NORTHERN IRELAND: FROM TRADITIONAL TO CONTEMPORARY CHEESE-MAKING

From the golden age of cheese-making in medieval times, to its supplanting by the production of butter in the 17th and 18th centuries, the entire island of Ireland shared the same rich cheese history. However, while the Republic's cheese industry underwent expansion in the late 1970s, the Northern Irish renaissance occurred more recently – thanks in part to an emerging "foodie" culture and significant investment in cheese production. The post-war years saw

Cheese in Ireland enjoyed a long period of success and prosperity – which was momentarily interrupted – and is now enjoying a renaissance. The first cattle and sheep on this island devoid of any wild bovine or ovine ancestors, were probably brought over by ship.

Cheese-making in Ireland nevertheless began to slow in the late 17th century due to the development of the butter making industry, as well as to extensive farming of potatoes, which were the island's main source of income at the time. Cheese-making made a comeback at the end of the 19th century – progressively re-establishing itself in the 20th century, and embarking on a course of drastic expansion in the 1970s and 1980s. Soon, small family-run cheese dairies offering original products would spring up across the island, with a large concentration in the western region of Cork. Many Irish factories also started making a variety of cheeses in the 1970s, particularly Cheddar, as well as farmhouse varieties.

Today, Irish cheese-making is going strong. Cheese is mostly made on small farms, with the country producing nearly 150 varieties made from cow, goat, and sheep's milk – each product bearing the marks of its region and terroir of origin.

Family-run companies and semi-industrial operations exist side by side – the latter focusing on the production of white and red Cheddars, brie-type cheeses (including smoked and blue), and hard cheeses such as Tipperary Emmental; while the former favour organic and raw-milk products. Artisanal cheeses include, among others, Tipperary's superb Cashel Blue; the goat's milk Clonmore; the multi-award winning washed-rind Ardrahan; Cooleeney, a camembert-type raw-milk cheese; and Dingle Peninsula seaweed-flavoured raw-milk cheese.

THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND & NORTHERN IRELAND

Until the beginning of the 20th century, Ireland's northern and southern parts had a shared history; equally interwoven were their cheese histories.

the production of UK hard-cheese varieties mushroom; in recent years, there has been a move towards speciality blue-vein and soft cheese. Consumer demand for the ever-popular Cheddar has been boosted by ongoing investment in production facilities, and by the introduction of new flavour variations to the Cheddar range. Northern Ireland is also one of Europe's biggest producers of Mozzarella, which is used as a pizza topping in the foodservice sector.

DENMARK: DISTINCTIVE FLAVOURS

Denmark has been producing cheese – predominantly of the cow’s milk variety – for no less than 5,000 years. Vikings exported their cheeses and dairy know-how as early as the Middle Ages, and new production methods were later introduced by monastic orders. Early 13th-century historical documents reveal that cheese was given to the nobility and the Church as a form of tax payment.

In the 19th century, Denmark’s dairy economy, like that of Ireland, was mostly based around the production of butter and cheese.

In 1870, Hanne Nielsen invented Denmark’s modern-day cheese in the form of Havarti – a mild, tangy semi-soft made from cow’s milk curd.

The year 1883 saw the founding of Denmark’s first dairy cooperative, kick-starting a dairy economy predominantly based on the cooperative system.

Specialists have continued inventing new cheese varieties up to the present day. Denmark has a booming cheese sector, which consists of human-sized companies and smaller businesses merged into larger units, including some very large cooperatives.

The country’s cooperatives collect 97% of Denmark’s milk and produce 87% of its cheese.

Denmark’s robust cheese production means that it dominates the sector in Scandinavia.

Denmark’s robust cheese production means that it dominates the sector in Scandinavia – which also includes Sweden, Norway and Finland. Danish output alone accounts for close to 50% of the region’s total production.

The Danes are acutely aware of the cheese sector’s weight in the country’s overall economy and its cultural significance.

In the 1950s, the Danish government decided to rename the country’s cheeses, giving them uniquely Danish names. This relegated to history names such as “Danish Gouda” (which became Maribo), “Danish Edam” (Molbo) and “Danish Tilsit” (Havarti).

This clearly shows how proud and fond the Danish people are of their cheese.

From creamy to firm, Danish cheese comes in a variety of textures. However, locals favour distinct aromas and rich flavours.

Denmark’s main cheese export is the Danablu, a blue cow’s milk cheese created in the early 20th century to rival Roquefort.

There are also many locally consumed cheeses, such as the Samsø, Danbo, Elbo, Tybo, Maribo and Esrom.

DENMARK



FRANCE: WEATHER AND ALTITUDE

Cheese’s symbolic and cultural significance in France is embodied by both traditional raw-milk and modern cheeses.

When comparing French cheese to that of its neighbours, one must look first and foremost at geography and climate. With its high alpine peaks, flatlands and river basins, France is a country of varied landscapes. It is also located at the convergence of oceanic, continental, alpine and Mediterranean climates.

French cheese, which is made using a variety of methods and comes in many shapes and sizes, textures and flavours, is a reflection of the country’s diverse weather conditions.

The wide array of varieties in France can also make it difficult to analyse the country’s cheese industry. Any study of this kind would have to take into account numerous environmental factors: alpine cheese is different to its counterpart from the plains; and cheese from the South is very unlike that from the North.

For all that, French cheese is not necessarily very different to that of other countries. Auvergne’s Cantal and English Cheddar may have common origins – as their shape and grainy texture suggest. The French Alps and the Jura share their cheese know-how with Switzerland; and cheeses from the Nord department are related to those from Wallonia and the Netherlands.

In France, as in the rest of Europe, the history of cheese is connected with both farming and production in abbeys.

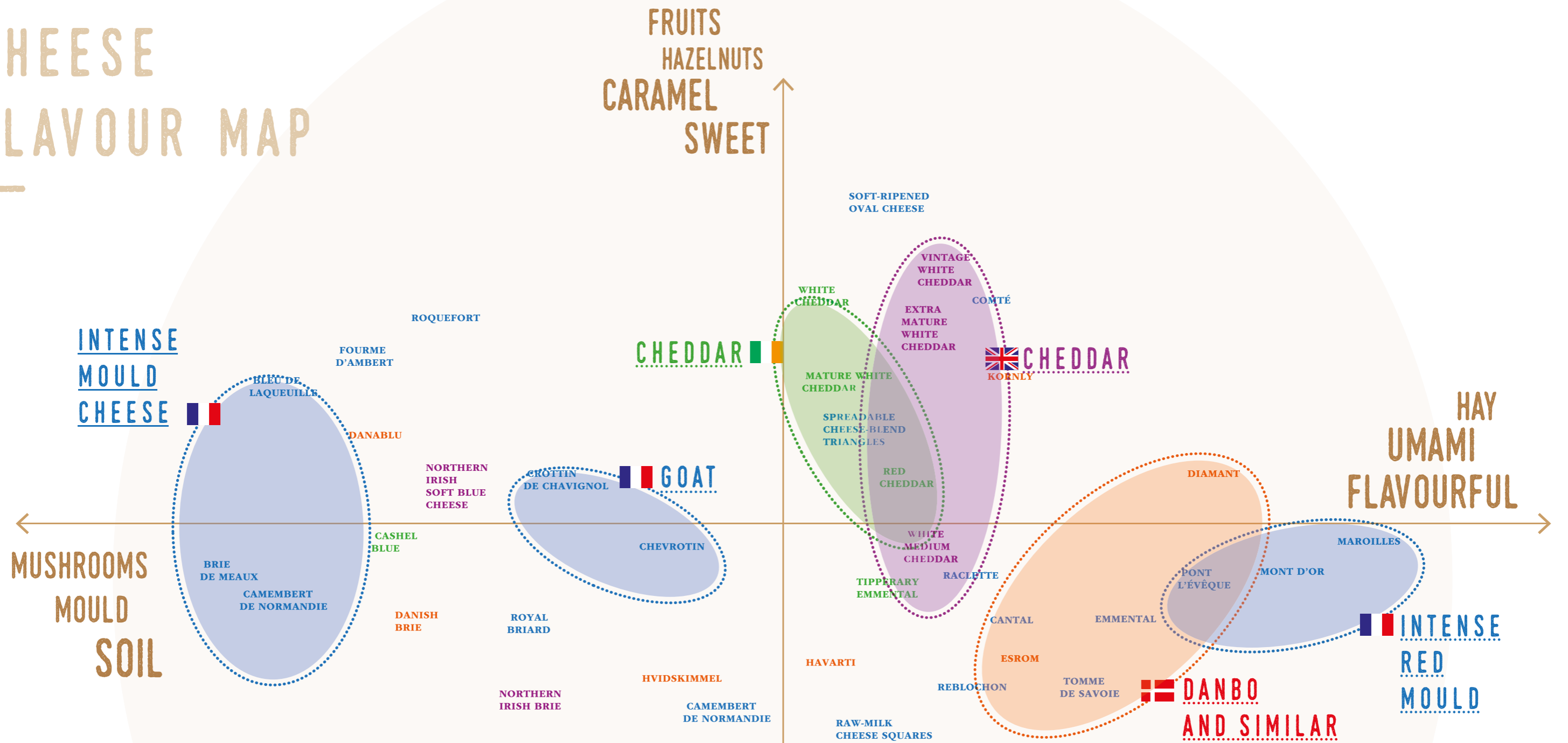
These observations highlight cheese’s pan-European character. When it comes to flavours and expertise, borders are porous and relatively meaningless.

In France, as in the rest of Europe, the history of cheese is connected with both farming and production in abbeys.

A great number of cheese varieties that have stood the test of time were invented in abbeys; other varieties came from farms, or, in the case of mountainous regions, from very old cheese cooperatives called “fruitières”.

Brie, Roquefort, and Auvergne Blues date back to the 7th and 8th centuries. French cheesemakers are deeply attached to the notion of terroir, and to artisanal and traditional products such as PDO, raw-milk, organic and farmstead cheese. On the other hand, the country’s cheesemakers have also long been interested in innovation – creating novelties such as mini processed-cheese triangles or cubes, and plain or herb-flavoured brand-name cheeses. The French art of cheese-making shines through in both contemporary creations and traditional products.

CHEESE FLAVOUR MAP



A EUROPEAN SENSORY ANALYSIS

METHODOLOGY / The above cheese map is based on a thorough sensory analysis evaluating the compounds responsible for the scent and flavour of food. The study analysed 50 cheeses: 5 from Northern Ireland, 5 from the Republic of Ireland, 8 from Denmark, and 22 from France. Each cheese underwent a 4-fold sensory evaluation based on appearance, scent, flavour, and texture. To guarantee the quality, reliability and impartiality of the analysis, samples were cut into small pieces and coded, making the cheese more difficult to recognise. The findings were translated into flavour descriptors, which profile each cheese according to its most prominent flavour notes. The map's axes are based on the most frequently occurring descriptors and sensory profiles: mushrooms/soil versus hay/flavourful on the X-axis, and fruits/hazelnuts versus milk/cream on the Y-axis. The cheeses were then positioned along the axes according to their dominant flavours.

OVERVIEW / French cheeses are characterised by abundance and variety, and often by intensity of flavour. This is reflected in their positioning all over the map, and frequently at opposite ends. Similarly, Danish cheeses are placed along both axes, albeit not at extreme ends. Irish and Northern Irish cheeses are primarily concentrated along the Y-axis, with cheddar-type products featuring mellower dominant flavours and sweet, nutty notes. This overview highlights the diversity of sensory profiles found in European cheese – a diversity that epitomises Europe's rich cheese heritage.

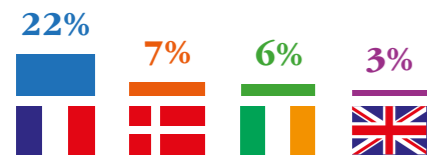
Source: Lisbeth Ankersen, Innova Consult, Denmark.
 Study carried out for the Cheese Up Your Life programme in November 2016.

DIVERSE CONSUMPTION PATTERNS

People across Europe enjoy cheese, but the way it is eaten varies greatly from one country to another.

Europe's second biggest cheese producer, France is also where the product is eaten the most often. A survey conducted in 2015 gives some insight into consumption patterns in four European countries².

Twenty-two percent of French people say they eat cheese several times a day – compared to 7% in Denmark, 6% in the Republic of Ireland and 3% in Northern Ireland. Forty-four percent of French people say they consume the product at least once a day. The figures are different for the other 3 countries: 30% in Denmark, 27% in the Republic of Ireland, and 21% in Northern Ireland.



Percentage of population consuming cheese several times a day

A French person eats approximately 25kg of cheese per year, and 95% of the population has it at least once a week – that's almost the entire country – putting it in first place in this category. The 'silver medal' goes to the Republic of Ireland (89%), with Northern Ireland and Denmark in third and fourth place respectively (83% and 65%).

HOW AND WHEN DO WE EAT CHEESE?

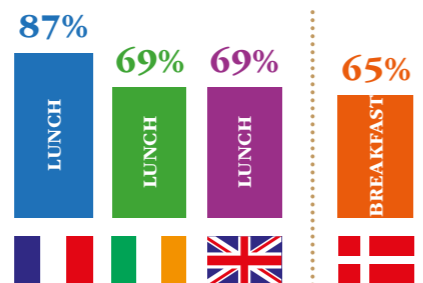
The four European countries may be geographically close, but their inhabitants' cheese-eating habits and consumption patterns are surprisingly different.

The French typically have cheese at lunch (87%) and dinner time (82%), with a significantly lower percentage eating it outside meal times (25%) and fewer still for breakfast (13%).

For the Danes, on the other hand, breakfast is the top cheese-eating time of the day (no less than once a week for 65%), followed by lunch and teatime. They have little interest in eating cheese for dinner or outside meal times, however.

The Irish, like the French, mainly eat cheese for lunch (69%), dinner (47%), and tea (46%). Breakfast is a less popular time for cheese consumption.

Consumption patterns in Northern Ireland are much the same.



Time of day Europeans consume the most cheese

TO COOK OR NOT TO COOK CHEESE — THAT IS THE QUESTION ...

Eighty-nine percent of French people prefer having cheese as is, at the end of a meal.

However, the French are increasingly eating cheese at different times and on different occasions, and using it in cooking: 47% of French consumers use it as one of the ingredients in a recipe, 30% as the main ingredient, and 43% put it in salads. The figures for the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland are comparable. In Denmark, however, they stand at 23%, 13% and 26% respectively.

Some thirty percent of French people eat cheese as a snack, further proving the popularity of snacking.

Grilled cheese sandwiches, however, are relatively uncommon in France (25%).

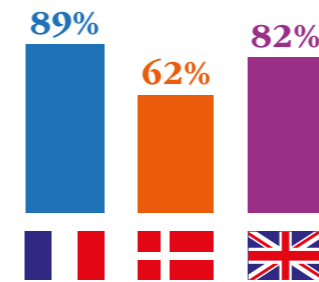
The reverse is true of the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, where 50% of the population eats grilled cheese on toast, and where the cheese sandwich is also particularly popular (73% and 66% respectively). Denmark is also a fan of the cheese sandwich (54%).

FROM THE SHELF OR FROM BEHIND THE CHEESE COUNTER?

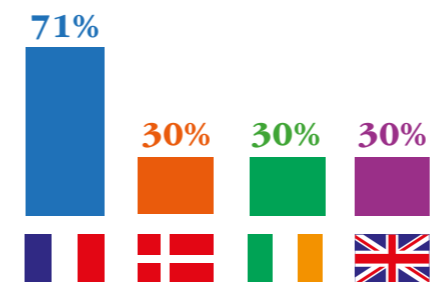
Cheese packaging is more or less the same in all four countries.

Though attached to the concept of terroir, the French are also the biggest consumers of packaged (89%), grated (85%) and sliced cheese (55%). Packaged cheese is also a favourite with Northern Irish consumers (82%), while the grated and sliced varieties are less popular, at 48% and 49% respectively. Packaged cheese also finds favour with Danish consumers (62%).

The French are still the leading buyers of over-the-counter and unpackaged cheese (71%), while Denmark, the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland lag behind with an average of 30% in all three countries. Cheese spreads are popular in Denmark and Northern Ireland, where they are consumed by approximately 43% of the population.



Consumption of packaged cheese by country (%)



Consumption of over-the-counter cheese by country (%)



EUROPE'S STAR CHEESES

When asked which cheeses they could name off the top of their heads, the Danish replied "Danbo"; the French, "Camembert"; in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, "Cheddar" was the first to come to mind.

Other French answers included – in descending order – Roquefort, Comté, Chèvre, Emmental, Gruyère and Brie. The Emmental sold in France is usually made locally, making Gouda – which came 9th in the survey – the foreign cheese most mentioned by respondents. More regional cheese varieties such as the Morbier, Reblochon, and Munster are much further down the list.

The foremost varieties mentioned by Danish consumers are domestic – such as Danbo (26%) and Havarti. Brie takes sixth place, and Camembert ninth. Feta, Mozzarella, and Cheddar are also high on the list, but the country's main cheese export Danablu curiously trails quite far behind in 17th position. Roquefort comes in last (25th place), probably due to the Danablu, which meets Danish demand for blue cheese.

Cheddar is king in the Republic of Ireland – followed by foreign varieties such as Edam, Brie, Mozzarella, and Gouda. Note, however, that the Emerald Isle also produces its own Brie.

Camembert is in eighth position, well ahead of Stilton. Cashel Blue and Red Cheddar ranked fairly low. These more rustic, aromatic cheeses, which feature lower still on the list, are probably eaten less often.

In Northern Ireland, Cheddar is the star – although Mozzarella is also well positioned. The cheeses that follow immediately afterwards differ slightly from those of the country's southern cousin. Brie, Edam, and Stilton, are followed in turn by an assortment of regional cheeses from the United Kingdom, such as Cheshire, Wensleydale, Lancashire and Leicester.

Northern Irish consumers also mentioned Camembert, Gouda, Feta, Parmesan and Emmental.

Europe's star cheeses: Danbo, Camembert and Cheddar.

WHERE DOES EUROPE'S FAVOURITE CHEESE COME FROM?

NORTHERN IRELAND

The picture in **Northern Ireland** is a local one: an overwhelming majority of respondents consume products from the United Kingdom (77%), including cheese from Northern Ireland. At 46%, French cheese is in second place, followed by cheese from Italy (21%), the Republic of Ireland (19%), and the Netherlands (14%).

DENMARK

Great lovers of local cheese, the **Danes** predominantly buy Danish products (85%). However, they are by no means averse to cheese from France (39%), Italy (21%) and the Netherlands (11%).

THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

The Republic of Ireland, too, is particularly fond of its local cheese (82%). Irish consumers also enjoy cheese from France (40%), the United Kingdom (31%), Italy (17%) and the Netherlands (13%).

FRANCE

French consumers mostly buy local – 99% of the cheese purchased in the country is made in France. The French are also long-time consumers of Dutch, Italian and Swiss cheese (42%, 35% and 20% respectively).

Essentially, all four countries show a preference for local cheese. This is particularly the case for France, whose products are currently recognised outside national borders to a greater extent than those of Denmark, the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Consumption habits in all four countries reflect their respective histories and economic relations with other states.

In all four countries, there is a sense of real, growing familiarity with European cheese outside of national borders – especially varieties used in cooking, such as Feta, Mozzarella, and Dutch cheeses.

AN EXCELLENT IMAGE ACROSS THE BOARD

All four countries believe European cheese to be very diverse and of high quality.

Consumers see European cheese as a benchmark, acknowledging that its consumption is an integral element of European identity. Overall, cheese has a very positive image in the four countries, and more than 75% of consumers think that eating cheese is part of European culture.



EUROPEAN CHEESE

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The evolving nature of cheese has allowed it to appeal to changing tastes, and remain part of our daily lives for 8,000 years. Some of the product's features are timeless, while others cater to contemporary lifestyles.

NATURE'S FOOD

Cheese is the product of multiple factors: soil, climate, farming, and the labour and know-how of humans who are in touch with nature. Be it traditional, semi or fully industrial, cheese is made using milk, rennet, and salt – with the occasional addition of spices, alcohol, or other aromatic ingredients. In the case of most cheese varieties, this has been so ever since the Neolithic period. The direct correlation between cheese pro-

duction and animal reproduction also makes this a highly seasonal product. This is why maturing – a natural process that preserves cheese beyond the lactation period – is so important. Mountain cheese, for instance, requires a long maturing period. Other varieties are also highly seasonal: spring is the time for Brie and Chèvre; summer for Reblochon; and autumn for the Mont-d'Or. If we know what to look for, we can determine any cheese's origin with only a bite, whiff, and a glance. There are clues to be found in the hints of animal, plant, and floral scents; in mineral undertones; in the taste variations caused by the season or region of production, or the maturing period.

Cheese made under similar conditions in the Danish region of Jutland, and in the Republic of Ireland or the French region of Auvergne, will not taste the same. Each will have its own characteristic flavour, and degrees of creaminess and acidity.

Research on the subject has recently been conducted in Denmark. The study looked at the botanical composition of hay eaten by cows in the winter. It found that, the larger the variety of wild plants in the hay, the more the cattle enjoyed it. This in turn enhanced the sensory characteristics of their milk, and therefore the resulting cheese.

A FLAVOURFUL FOOD

Cheese is a natural flavour enhancer – and the longer it is matured, the more intense its aroma. Fresh curd is mild and creamy – but once salted, dried, and matured, it acquires lingering new nuances that are pleasing to the palate, and that grow more intense over time.

This distinctly strong flavour is mainly due to a combination of amino and fatty acids liberated by cheese cultures during the ripening process. Amino acids, which are present in the most sought-after foods – including truffles, caviar, seafood, dried fish and mushrooms, and cured meats – develop through drying, fermentation, or reduction. They can be found in traditional fermented

condiments such as the Ancient Roman garum; soy sauce; Japan's dashi; Asian fish sauce; West Africa's sumbala; and Worcestershire sauce – which is made according to an old Indian recipe.

Cheese is an integral part of many traditional cuisines. The Japanese term umami is increasingly used to describe the product's powerful taste. The word is used to speak of a great range of concepts, but rarely is it employed in its literal sense: "that which tastes good". Umami does not refer to a "fifth taste", nor to one of the "basic tastes", but rather to intense flavour and a long finish. Simply put, umami means "flavourful".

Cheese has always been a great taste enhancer – the hard varieties in particular are used to add flavour to dishes across Europe. Cheese enhances and extends flavours, making food tart and salty, and its texture oily and creamy.

These intense flavours can be found in matured Mimolette and Cheddar, as well as in creamy Bries and goats' cheeses. All cheese has a complex flavour profile: Cheddar alone was found to contain nearly 260 flavour components.

From the milk of goats, sheep, or cows; creamy, soft, or firm; fragrant, flavourful or spicy; tart, or subtle and smooth on the palate – there are as many different aromas as there are cheese types.

Not only has cheese been a natural food par excellence for the duration of its existence, but it also plays a timeless role in gastronomy. As long as mankind continues to care about flavour, cheese will keep its prominent place in our lives.

SERVE WITH ...

The more flavour components they share, the better different foods taste when consumed together. The aromatic complexity of cheese means that it can be served with a vast number of other foods, both liquid and solid.

The art of flavour matching, which grew out of the French practice of wine-and-food pairing, has recently expanded in various directions – food is now matched with tea or beer, whisky with cakes and pastries, beer with chocolate, and so forth.

It would be impossible to provide a complete picture of these pairings here. However, some examples do demonstrate that European cheese is very versatile indeed.

It can be eaten with all kinds of wine, beer, whisky, tea – and even coffee.

Combining cheese with certain fruits, mushrooms, spices and condiments and sweet foods such as white chocolate, can give surprisingly pleasant results. The current popularity of flavoured cheese – a big hit in Ireland for instance – offers a wealth of new possibilities.

And the taste experiment is just beginning.

Cafés, restaurants, and wine bars across Europe offer selections of cheeses to accompany the wines they serve.

Some countries have had successful ventures into beer and cheese pairing; elsewhere, the product is being matched with fine tea or coffee.

Interestingly, Northern European cheese varieties from Denmark, the Republic of Ireland, France and Northern Ireland have long been ideal accompaniments to coffee, which is a perfect match for their sometimes strong, sometimes lingering milky caramel flavours.

The art of flavour matching, which grew out of the French practice of wine-and-food pairing, has recently expanded.



Cheddar has a particularly complex character: creamy, sharp and tart all at once, this highly aromatic cheese can accompany any beverage – coffee in particular.

All over the world, white wine tends to be the best match for cheese.

Red wines – excepting Port – are less suited to the exercise, as they contain

tannins which produce a bitter taste when combined with cheese.

Classic pairings include dry Burgundy whites with bloomy rind cheeses such as Danish and Northern Irish Brie, and Camembert; dry whites with goat's cheese from all terroirs; rounder, fuller-bodied, sometimes sweet whites with semi-hard, tangy cheese like Havarti and other relatively strong Danish varieties; long-ripened hard pressed cheese such as Comté, Beaufort, and Cheddar, and pressed or hard Danish varieties with oxygenated wines like Jerez and the vin jaune ("yellow wine") from the Jura. All blue cheese is well suited to natural sweet wines of the Port variety, as are very "runny" and strong cheeses. Full-flavoured Danish cheese is a good match for beer and aromatic traditional drinks such as malt whisky and aquavit.

PRACTICAL AND IN STEP WITH CONTEMPORARY LIFESTYLES

How has cheese continually remained in step with human lifestyles, including those of contemporary people? Thanks to its timeless and highly versatile nature.

CHEESE IS MADE TO BE SHARED

It can be sliced, portioned, and passed around. It is perfect for gatherings, bringing people together around one central area. Cheese plays a significant part in creating a convivial atmosphere, and has retained its sizeable social dimension.

CHEESE CAN BE EATEN ANY TIME OF THE DAY OR NIGHT

Breakfast; mid-morning; lunch; teatime; before and during dinner; after a match, movie or play ... and late at night. It is always 'cheese o'clock'.

CHEESE TRAVELS WELL

Originally devised as a means of easily transporting milk, cheese is by definition a travelling food. New developments in trade as well as food exports and preferences – whose increasingly international nature blurs the lines between countries – have made it easier for Europeans to learn about foreign cheese and discover new flavours.

CHEESE IS PRACTICAL

Cheese is practical, as well as simple to consume and transport. It adapts to our nomadic working lives and is a ready-to-eat snack; we eat it with our hands, any and everywhere – including the street. We take it with us when we travel distances both short and long; pressed and packaged cheeses are particularly popular 'travel companions'.

CHEESE CAN BE CONSUMED IN A VARIETY OF NEW WAYS

Cheese can be consumed in a variety of new ways. It is no longer limited to the traditional breakfast-lunch-dinner trio: there are an increasing number of occasions to indulge in 'cheese moments' – with brunches, teas, pre-dinner drinks, snacking and nibbling, après-ski fondues and raclettes, grilled cheese sandwiches (very popular in both the Republic and Northern Ireland), picnics and buffets. Other ways of experiencing a different side of cheese include attending classes at cheese-tasting centres – which often also include beverage pairing; and tasting selections of pre-cut cheese assembled by master cheese maturers – featuring aged varieties enhanced with truffles, nuts, dried fruit, wine and whisky. Cheese – in its many shapes and sizes – is part of everyday life.

CHEESE IS A MAJOR PART OF THE "FOODIE" EXPERIENCE

It also has a prominent place in general culinary and gastronomic trends of the moment. These trends are characterised by a growing interest in high-quality, natural, and authentic products. There are an increasing number of blogs featuring or dedicated to cheese and recipes featuring cheese. While its taste and versatility in the kitchen certainly contribute to the popularity of cheese, the product has other appealing attributes: natural and locally made, it is also sustainable and environmentally friendly. As a result, cheese is increasingly sought-after as the demand for healthier food continues to grow.

IN COOKING, CHEESE IS SYNONYMOUS WITH FLAVOUR, SPEED AND SIMPLICITY

It melts quickly and can liven up a dish in no time, or even be its main ingredient. With the addition of cheese, a dish can be transformed in the blink of an eye.

It is above all its taste that makes cheese essential. It is a prime cooking ingredient, both at home and in kitchens run by the most creative of chefs – in whose hands it becomes a spice and a condiment.

Creative cheese cuisine has taken over all of Europe.

EUROPEAN CHEESE

HERE TO STAY

TRADITIONAL CHEESE IS THRIVING

Label Rouge, organic, protected designation of origin (PDO) and protected geographical indication (PGI) are labels that regulate the quality of a large number of European cheeses.

Products bearing these labels must be made in compliance with strict production procedures.

CHEESE IS A PART OF EUROPE'S HERITAGE AND OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL HISTORY

When we eat cheese, we take in elements of geography and history.

European cheese is the subject of theses, monographs, and entire books; we study cow's milk and nutrition; and contemplate the connection between cheese and human culture.

Cheese is also a gold mine of information for those interested in the concept of terroir and traditional cheese-making methods. Every variety tells a different tale.



EUROPE'S CHEESES ARE A REFLECTION OF ITS DIVERSITY

Whether it be a little cube of processed cheese, or 24-month old Comté; the compulsory large cheese platter served at all good restaurants, or Camembert on a slice of baguette over lunch break; melted Cheddar on Irish oven bakes, or Cashel Blue with pale ale and crackers; Péla³ with Reblochon, or Denmark's Danbo toast – cheese is an integral part of Europe's food identity. Europe's cheeses are a reflection of the continent's diverse landscapes, climates, histories, customs, and of the knowledge and skills handed down from generation to generation. The product is an essential part of our daily lives, and the ultimate pleasure food: the future of cheese is looking bright.

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