



Look for the Seal

California Milk Advisory Board



CALIFORNIA ARTISAN CHEESES



Storage & Handling Tips

California Artisan Cheese



Because cheese is a living food, it needs a bit of care to be its best. Artisan cheeses—that is, handcrafted, typically small-batch cheeses known for their unique flavors and textures—are no exception. But with just a little attention, you can help preserve those qualities and prolong both freshness and flavor.



Storing Cheese at Home

To serve cheese at its best and help make it last as long as possible in your refrigerator, follow these simple steps:

- Buy top-quality cheese in good condition. At the store, make sure the package is sealed and the cheese inside looks appealing.
- For Fresh cheeses—like ricotta and fresh Mozzarella—check the freshness date on the package. At home, keep fresh cheeses refrigerated in their original containers and use them within several days. If mold develops, discard the cheese.



- For all other types of cheese, once you get home, unwrap the cheese. If you'll be using it within a few days, re-wrap it in wax, parchment or butcher paper. (Plastic wrap doesn't allow cheese to breathe.)
- If you won't be using your cheese within a few days, rub its surface with olive, canola or other cooking oil. For White Rind (for example, Brie), Blue and Washed Rind (for example, Teleme) cheeses, rub only the cut surfaces with oil, excluding the rind.
- Store cheeses by family—White Rind, Blue, Washed Rind and Flavored (for example, Pepper Jack)—to prevent mingling of flavors. For each family, place a clean, dry, lightly crumpled paper towel in a container, add the cheese and store covered in the refrigerator.
- Pop the top and change the paper towel and container once a week.
- If mold starts to form on an oil-rubbed cheese, it'll only consume the oil, not the cheese. Simply wipe off the mold, or rinse it off with tepid water and pat the cheese dry. Re-rub with oil and store in a fresh container.
- Turn cheese over every few weeks—this will help evenly distribute its moisture and natural oils and allow the cheese to develop gracefully.
- Wash your hands before handling cheese and always work on a clean cutting surface.

Can I Freeze Cheese?

Freezing isn't the ideal way to store cheese, but it can be done, with Hard and Very Hard cheeses being the best candidates. Before freezing, cut cheese into small pieces (a pound or less) and cover each tightly in plastic wrap. When you're ready to use, thaw frozen cheese in the refrigerator for a few hours and enjoy it soon after.

What is Cheese?

Cheese has long been valued for not only its great taste, but also as a way of storing and easily transporting the natural goodness of milk. Cheesemaking starts when rennet is added to milk, turning it into curds and whey. From there, several factors determine the type and flavor of the final cheese, including the type of starter culture the cheesemaker uses, the amount of whey left in the curds after they're cut and cooked, the amount of pressure applied to them and, perhaps most importantly, how and how long the cheese is aged.

Cooking with California Artisan Cheeses

Many cooked dishes draw on the great taste of cheese to enhance flavor and texture. Most cheeses are easy to cook with, as long as you are aware of a few simple rules:

- Turn down the heat. Use low and medium temperatures for a short time—just long enough to melt the cheese and blend it with other ingredients. High heat or long cooking times can make cheese stringy and tough.
- Shred, grate or cut cheese into small pieces to promote quick melting and even blending.
- When using cheese as a topping, add it at the end of baking or broiling and heat just long enough to melt.
- For sauces, add cheese as the last ingredient and heat just long enough to melt.
- Weight is the best method for measuring cheese in recipes. That said, four ounces of natural cheese equals about one cup of shredded cheese. One ounce of cheese equals about one-quarter cup shredded.



Look for the Real California Milk Seal

California is the second-largest cheese-producing state in the U.S. When you look for the Real California Milk seal, you're guaranteed a natural cheese made from 100% California milk.



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