



Cheese of the Month: Parmigiano Reggiano

History of Parmigiano Reggiano

The history of Parmigiano Reggiano cheese goes back more than eight centuries. It is the story of how producers in a small zone in north-central Italy won recognition for the extraordinary quality of their carefully crafted cheese.

King of Cheeses

Amazingly, Parmigiano Reggiano cheese is made with just three ingredients: superb milk, sea salt and natural rennet. No additives or preservatives are used, ever, to make Parmigiano Reggiano, considered by many to be "the king of cheeses." Today we know it as Parmigiano Reggiano, but the French name Parmesan (Parmesano, in Italian) dates back even further--and the two are one and the same cheese! In Europe, by law, Parmesan can be used only to refer to Parmigiano Reggiano.

Making Parmigiano Reggiano

During the 13th century, Benedictine and Cistercian monks drained swampy land between the towns of Parma and Reggio and built irrigation systems to sustain lush pastures. These turned out to be ideal grazing pastures for dairy cows. Before long, the cheese made by these farming monks from the rich milk--eventually known as Parmesan or Parmigiano Reggiano--was coveted by people in other parts of northern Italy, such as in the port city of Genoa. Because of its good taste and nutritional properties, this hard cheese became a staple on sea voyages. Boccaccio, the great medieval writer, also celebrated the cheese destined to become Parmigiano Reggiano in his Decameron tales.



Map of Parmigiano Reggiano making region

Parmigiano Reggiano Quick Facts:

Milk Type: Cow
Country of Origin: Italy
Age: 12 months, minimum
Texture: Firm, Grainy
Taste: Earthy, Nutty, Grassy
Wine Pairing: Chianti, Lambrusco, or Prosecco

KeHE Distributors carries the following Parmigiano Reggiano. Please check with your Account Manager for availability in your area.

Belgioioso Imported Parmigiano Reggiano Wedges
 UPC #031142901009
 Case/Pack: 12/8oz

Parmigiano Reggiano is a hard grating cheese with a granular texture and appearance that results from the techniques used in its making as well as to long aging. Parmigiano Reggiano is not pressed like other hard grating cheeses. It is gently weighted, giving it the granular quality known as friability. Aging contributes greatly to the flavor of Parmigiano Reggiano and, in the centuries before refrigeration, it also resulted in a cheese ideal for storage and for transporting over long distances. This cheese was welcomed as a nutrient-dense, highly portable food for sailors and traders, but it was also beloved by epicureans. By the 18th century, this cheese was on Thomas Jefferson's table and the history of Parmigiano Reggiano in America was under way.

Parmigiano Reggiano Consortium Is Formed

Eventually, producers in the Parma-Reggio region and three other adjoining provinces joined forces to establish a controlled production zone and establish high standards for making the cheese that, in 1954, was officially named Parmigiano Reggiano.

Parmigiano Reggiano, a PDO Product

In 1996, Parmigiano Reggiano became the first Italian cheese to earn certification as a PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) product, an elite group of high-quality European foods made by traditional methods in strictly defined geographical areas.

Each wheel of Parmigiano Reggiano carries proof of its authenticity. During production, the future rind is impressed with the number of the "caseificio" (cheese house), production date and pin dots forming the words "Parmigiano Reggiano." The pin dots guarantee that the cheese was made under regulation of the Consorzio del Formaggio Parmigiano Reggiano, the governing party that checks each wheel to make sure the cheesemakers are producing a cheese that conforms to a stringent standard of quality. After one year of aging, each wheel that passes the test is branded with an oval certification mark and left to finish aging.

Today, in keeping with the explosion of interest in authentic foods and regional Italian cooking, Parmigiano Reggiano cheese is imported into the U.S. and many other countries. In 1996, thanks to two Italian astronauts, Parmigiano Reggiano became the first all-natural raw milk cheese to be launched into outer space. Later Parmigiano Reggiano was adopted as an official space food, valued for the bone-strengthening calcium and other nutrients it contributes to astronauts' diets.

As delicious as it is freshly grated over a bowl of spaghetti, don't stop there! This complex cheese is magnificent served on its own. Break off small chunks, use a vegetable peeler to create

Sorella Parmigiano
Reggiano EW
UPC #856146003043
Case/Pack: 12/7oz

Sorella Parmigiano
Reggiano Wheel
UPC #077420101075
Case/Pack: 1/75lb

Sorella Quarter Wheel
Parmigiano Reggiano
UPC #0774201082
Case/Pack: 1/18lb

Sorella Pre Cut Parmigiano
Reggiano (For Hand
Wrapping)
UPC #07740807748
Case/Pack: 1/11lb

Sorella Shaved Parmigiano
Reggiano Cup
UPC #856146003050
Case/Pack: 10/3.5 oz

For questions about
Specialty Cheese

Contact
Heather Opolony:
heather.opolony@kehe.com

paper thin slivers or cut into bite-sized slices. Taste it as you would a perfectly ripe Brie or Stilton, savoring its nuances. Enjoy its delightful range of flavors and textures: nutty, sweet, grassy, creamy, grainy, fruity.

Everyone loves Parmigiano Reggiano, so not only can you serve it alone, you can pair it with a long list of other flavors that highlight its subtle bite and sweetness. One of the best side dishes is thin shavings of Parmigiano Reggiano on a bed of spicy arugula dressed with extra virgin olive oil and aged balsamic vinegar. Try it also with honey-drizzled pears, stirred into a creamy risotto or as a real treat on eggs with shaved truffles. And, of course, the flavor duo of Parmigiano Reggiano and tomato sauce is one of the most satisfying combinations in food history.

When it comes to wine, bring out the full potential of the cheese by serving it with light-to medium-bodied Reds such as Chianti, Valpolicella or Lambrusco, as well as Prosecco and other sparkling Whites.



Parmigiano Reggiano is one of a few cheeses that has an entire website completely dedicated to it...for more information about this wonderful cheese visit

www.parmigianoreggiano.com

Parmesan Crisps

Ingredients

- *3/4 cup finely shredded Parmigiano Reggiano cheese*
- *1 1/2 teaspoons all-purpose flour*

Preparation

Preheat oven to 350°F and line a lightly-greased baking sheet with parchment paper.

In a small bowl stir together Parmigiano Reggiano and flour. On prepared baking sheet spoon spatula

level tablespoons of mixture in mounds 4 inches apart and spread mounds gently into 3 1/2-inch-long ovals. Bake crisps in middle of oven until golden, 8 to 10 minutes. Cool crisps

completely on baking sheet and remove carefully with a metal spatula. Crisps may be made 2 days in advance and kept between layers of wax paper in an airtight container at room temperature.