



SIMPLY GOOD FOOD

Cheese

Cheese is a highly nutritious and palatable food. It is of significant value in the diet because it contains almost all of the protein and essential minerals, vitamins, and other nutrients of milk.

The making of cheese dates back more than 4,000 years. It was made and eaten in biblical times. The first cheese, according to an ancient legend, was made accidentally by an Arabian merchant who put his supply of milk into a pouch made from a sheep's stomach, as he set out on a day's journey across the desert. The rennet in the lining of the pouch, combined with the heat of the sun, caused the milk to separate into curd and whey. That night he found that the whey satisfied his thirst and the cheese (curd) had a delightful flavor which satisfied his hunger.

Travelers from Asia are believed to have brought the art of cheesemaking to Europe. Italy became the cheesemaking center of Europe during the 10th Century. The Pilgrims included cheese in the ship's supplies when they made their voyage to America on the Mayflower in 1620. Until the 19th century it remained a local farm industry. In 1851 the first cheese factory in the United States was built by Jesse Williams in Oneida County, New York.

Demand for natural cheese was more than 6 billion pounds and the demand for processed cheese exceeded 2 billion pounds annually by the early 90's. Almost one-third of all milk produced each year in the U.S. is used to make cheese. There are over 400 varieties of cheese produced in the U.S.

Character: The distinctive character of various cheeses is determined by the kind of milk used, the amount of fat in the milk, coagulation methods, cutting, cooking, forming the curd, type of culture, salting and ripening.

Store: Refrigerate at 40° F or lower (without freezing). Tightly wrap cheese in plastic wrap. Generally, the harder the cheese, the longer it keeps. Cheese held for longer periods of time, however, will continue to ripen and develop a sharper flavor. Should cheese become dry, grate and keep in covered container in the refrigerator. Use in cooking as a melted topping or flavoring. To remove mold from cheese, trim ½ inch of cheese on all sides where mold is visible. Pasteurized Processed Cheese, which does not age or ripen like natural cheese, keeps extremely well under refrigerated conditions. Most cheeses can be frozen for 6 weeks to 2 months and used in cooking. Soft cheese can not be frozen as it affects texture.

Cheese and Food Pairings: Cheese may be used with any food from apples to zucchini. Select the type that goes with your taste as well as the food you are serving it with. Use your imagination to enjoy the world of cheese.

Cooking with Cheese: When you cook with cheese, add it to other ingredients in small pieces so that it will blend evenly and cook in a shorter time. Keep the heat LOW - just enough to melt and blend the cheese. High heat or long cooking makes cheese tough and stringy. Add cheese as the last ingredient when making a sauce and heat just until melted.

Microwaving Cheese: To soften cream cheese, remove foil wrapper. Place cheese on microwavable plate. Microwave, uncovered, on medium (50%); a 3 ounce package will need 40 to 60 seconds; 8 ounces 1 to 1½ minutes.

To warm cheese, place ½ pound piece on microwavable dish. Microwave, uncovered, on medium-low (30%). Rotate after half the time. Firm aged cheese requires 30 to 40 seconds. Soft and semisoft cheese needs 20 to 45 seconds. Let stand 5 minutes before using.

Nutrition: Milk, cheese and other dairy foods are excellent sources of calcium and protein. Calcium is essential for the growth and maintenance of teeth and bones and the prevention of osteoporosis.

Cooking Equivalents:

<i>Cheese</i>	<i>Amount</i>	<i>Yield</i>
Cheddar or Swiss	4 oz.	1 cup shredded cheese
Blue	4 oz.	1 cup crumbled cheese
Parmesan or Romano	4 oz.	1 cup grated cheese

Serving Tip:

Remove cheese from the refrigerator at least 30 minutes before serving to bring out the fullest flavor.

Types: Soft (Blue, Camembert, Ricotta, Cream cheese); Semi-soft (Brick, Monterey, Jack, Mozzarella); Semi-Soft to Hard (Edam, Gouda, Baby Swiss) Hard (Swiss, Cheddar, Colby, Colby-Jack, Provalone); Very Hard (Parmesan, Romano); Speciality (Pasteurized Process cheese, cold pack).

Cheesy Potato Soup

6 potatoes, peeled and cubed	4 cups water
1 onion, chopped	½ pint whipping cream
3 green onions, sliced thin	4 cups milk
1 carrot, peeled and grated	1 lb. Velveeta cheese, cubed or shredded
1 stalk celery, sliced thin	6 slices bacon, cooked crisp & crumbled
2 teaspoons salt	Fresh black pepper (optional)

In a large Dutch oven, add first 7 ingredients and cook until tender, about 15 minutes. Add whipping cream, milk, and cheese. Heat only until cheese is melted, stirring often. **DO NOT BOIL.** Add cooked bacon just before serving. Season with black pepper, if desired. Makes 8 to 10 servings.

Cocktail Cheese Muffins

¾ cup butter	1 carton (8 ozs.) sour cream
2 cups (8 ozs.) shredded sharp Cheddar cheese	2 tablespoons frozen chopped chives
2 cups self-rising flour	

Melt butter in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Add Cheddar cheese and cook 2 minutes, stirring constantly. Stir in flour, sour cream, and chives. Spoon batter into ungreased miniature muffin pans, filling two-thirds full. Bake at 375 degrees for 20 to 22 minutes. Remove muffins from pans immediately. Makes 4 dozen.

MICROWAVE: Melt butter in 8-cup glass measuring bowl; add Cheddar cheese and microwave 1 to 2 minutes until smooth. Stir in flour, sour cream, and chives. Proceed as above.

Sources: Dairy MAX, Inc.; Cheese Facts, National Cheese Institute, 1993; SPS Festive Foods, 1996.

Supporting State Extension Goal: Health, Safety and Well Being

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