

Glossary of Cheese Terms

Acrid

A term used to characterize cheese that is sharp, bitter or irritating in taste or smell.

Affine

(1) The French word meaning to finish or refine. A washed-rind cheese, for example, may be affine au marc de borgogne, meaning the rind has been washed with marc, a white brandy made from grape pomace during curing.

Affineur

One who cares for the aging of cheeses.

Aftertaste

The last flavor sensation perceived after tasting a cheese. Pronounced aftertastes usually detract from the

Aged

Generally describes a cheese that has been cured longer than six months. Aged cheeses are characterized as having more pronounced and fuller, sometimes sharper flavors than medium-aged or current-aged cheeses.

Aging

Often referred to as curing or ripening, aging is the process of holding cheeses in carefully controlled environments to allow the development of microorganisms that usually accentuate the basic cheese flavors. See

American

A descriptive term used to identify the group of American-type cheeses which includes Cheddar, Colby, granular or stirred-curd, and washed or soaked-curd cheeses. Monterey Jack is also included in this group.

Ammoniated or Ammoniacal

A term describing cheese that either smells or tastes of ammonia as a result of being overripe or mishandled (i.e., held at fluctuating temperatures). This condition may afflict the rinds of cheese varieties with white mold (bloomy) rinds, such as Brie, Camembert and Chèvres. A hint of ammonia is not objectionable, but heavy ammoniation is.

Annatto

A natural vegetable dye used to give many cheese varieties, especially the Cheddars, a yellow-orange hue. Annatto is odorless, tasteless and is not a preservative.

Appearance

A term referring to all visual assessments of cheese, from its wrapping, rind, color and texture, to how it looks

Aroma

A general term for the odor or scent of cheese. Cheese may lack aroma or display aromas, which range from faint to pronounced, depending upon the cheese variety. Aroma is closely allied to flavor, although cheese with a distinct odor may exhibit a mild flavor while cheese lacking odor may present a strong flavor. Aromas may also specify particular tastes or scents, such as fruity, earthy, oily and nutty. The cheese rind may have a different odor

Aromatic

A descriptive term for cheeses with distinct, pronounced aromas.

Artisan

A term describing cheese made in small batches, often with milk from a limited number of farms. Having unique texture or taste profiles developed in small sealed production or by specialized producers.

Assertive

A term indicating the presence of a pronounced taste or aroma.

Astringent

A term descriptive of a harsh taste with a puckery, almost medicinal quality.

Baby

A smaller quantity of cheese formed into a mini-wheel or cylinder-like shape.

Ball/Round

A style that ranges from a very small sphere, as with Fresh Mozzarella (the size of a cherry), to larger than a softball for a Gouda or Edam cheese ball, and a Boccini or Bocci ball for Provolone.

Barny or Barnyardy

A descriptive term referring to strong farm-related aromas. Sometimes also called cowy. This characterization

Barrel

A natural style of Cheddar cheese specifically produced for the manufacture of Pasteurized Process cheeses meant to be further processed (i.e., natural variety shredded cheese and a range of processed cheeses).

Basic Ingredient

A term usually referring to the milk source from which a cheese is made, such as cow's milk, ewe's milk or goat's milk. Rennet, cultures, enzymes and salt are also considered basic ingredients of cheese.

Basket

A nontraditional form some cheesemakers use in style presentation of their cheese. Basket Muenster cheese is an example that is readily available in Wisconsin.

Beestings

The first milk a cow gives after calving. Very high in protein, beestings is used in Spain for the production of

Bitter

An unpleasant, biting flavor — usually an aftertaste. A bitter aftertaste is sometimes associated with variations in manufacturing and curing or aging procedures. It is more prevalent in cured cheeses that have a high-moisture content. Bitterness is often confused with astringency. True bitterness is a sensation that is typified by the

Bleu

The French word for blue that is used in reference to the Blue-veined cheese varieties. Blue molds are typically *Penicillium roqueforti* or *Penicillium glaucum*. Famous varieties include Bleu, Gorgonzola and Stilton.®

Block

The most common style of cheese produced for wholesale distribution. Descriptive of the size and shape of cheese before it is cut for distribution and sale. It is recognized as one of the major styles of natural cheese and is

Bloomy Rind

A descriptive term for an edible cheese rind (crust) that is covered with a harmless, flavor-producing growth of white *Penicillium* mold. The bloomy rind is formed by spraying the cheese surface with spores of *Penicillium candidum* mold before curing. Occasionally, brown, pink or red specks are interspersed through the white mold

Blue-veined

A characteristic of cheese varieties that develop blue or green streaks of harmless, flavor-producing mold throughout the interior. Generally, veining gives cheese an assertive and piquant flavor.

Bocci/Boccini

A ball-shaped style, typical of Provolone cheese. Bocci weighs approximately 5 pounds. Boccini is a smaller

Bocconcini

A term describing a traditional-size Fresh Mozzarella ball, weighing 1-3/4 ounces. Bocconcini translates from

Body

Represents the physical attributes of cheese when touched, handled, cut or eaten. The body may feel rubbery, firm, elastic, soft, resilient, yielding, supple, oily, etc. When rolled between the fingers or cut, it may appear waxy or crumbly. Its mouthfeel may be grainy or creamy. A cheese also may be felt to determine its condition of

Braided

A nontraditional style in the Pasta Filata cheese family. Cheesemakers will take strands of this type of cheese and

Brine

A salt-and-water solution in which some cheese varieties are washed or dipped during the cheesemaking process. Certain cheeses, such as Feta, are packed or stored in brine.

Brining

A step in the manufacture of some cheese varieties where the whole cheese is floated briefly in a brine solution. Brining is common in the production of Mozzarella, Provolone, Swiss, Parmesan and Romano cheeses.

Broken Down

Refers to a change in the texture of cheese. For example, cheese may change from a firm, smooth or coarse, curdy or rubbery texture to a waxy (similar to cold butter), mealy or pasty texture.

Brushed

During the curing process, washed-rind cheese varieties are brushed with liquids such as brine, beer, wine or brandy to maintain a moist rind and impart distinctive, earthy flavors. Parmesan and other hard cheeses may be

bST/Bovine Somatotropin (Also see rBGH)

A naturally occurring protein hormone from the pituitary gland of cattle that affects the amount of milk produced by

Bulk Cheese

Cheese in its original manufactured form, such as a 40-pound block of Cheddar.

Butterfat

See Fat Content and Milkfat Content.

Butterfat (Fat, Milkfat)

The amount of butterfat/fat in any cheese. Fat content is determined by analyzing the fat in the dry matter of cheese. The fat is expressed as a percentage of the entire dry matter. In reference to cheese fat, milkfat and

Buttermilk

The liquid which remains after churning butter from cultured cream. The liquid remaining after churning sweet cream is sweet cream buttermilk. Also a cultured skim milk.

Buttery

A descriptive term for cheese with a high fat content, such as the double and triple creams, or cheese with a sweet flavor and creamy texture reminiscent of butter.

Caciocavallo

Years ago, Provolone was transported via horseback to market. The common style for this cheese was Caciocavallo. This cheese style is long, slender and cylinder in shape, with a notch around the cylinder's top to

Casein

The principal protein in milk. During the cheesemaking process, casein solidifies, curdles or coagulates into

Catch Weights

The variable weights of individual pieces of cheese. For example, a 5-pound loaf of Muenster may be slightly over

Chalky (Color)

A desirable attribute referring to the true white color or smooth, fine-grained texture of older Chèvres and young Brie. However, a chalky appearance on the surface is undesirable in many cheese varieties, such as Cheddar.

Chalky (Mouthfeel)

A dry, grainy sensation usually caused by insoluble proteins. Sometimes described as powdery. Generally not a

Cheddar & Colby

A term used to classify cheeses that share characteristics exemplified by Cheddar that may include the process of manufacture, consistency, texture, odor or flavor. Colby is a Cheddar-type cheese.

Cheddaring

The process used in making Cheddar whereby piles of small curds, which have been separated from the whey, are knit together and cut into slabs. The slabs are then repeatedly turned over and stacked to help drain additional whey and aid in the development of the proper acidity (pH) and body of the cheese. These slabs are

Cheese Monger

An American term for a knowledgeable cheese sales person.

Chemical

A descriptive term for a cheese aroma or flavor taint which usually indicates improper manufacturing or

Chevres

The plural form of the French word for goat originally used to classify all goat cheeses produced in France, but now commonly refers to all goat cheeses, regardless of their origin.

Chèvres

The plural form of the French word for goat, originally used to classify all goat cheeses produced in France, but now commonly refers to all soft fresh goat cheeses, regardless of their country of origin.

Chunk/Bar

The rectangular configuration is the most common shape of retail cheese cuts. Exact weight cheese is often referred to as a bar of cheese (8 or 16 ounces). Random weight producers describe smaller retail cuts as chunks.

Ciliegini

A term describing the small, traditional size of Fresh Mozzarella, weighing only one-third of an ounce. Ciliegini translates from Italian to English meaning little cherries.

Clean

(1) A descriptive term for cheese that is free of unpleasant aromas and off flavors. (2) A lack of lingering

Close

A descriptive term for cheese with a smooth, tight texture, such as Cheddar. A close texture contains few, if any, mechanical holes. A cheese with small holes, like Colby, is characterized as open. See Open.

Coagulation (Curdling)

A step in cheese manufacture when milk's protein, casein, is clotted by the action of rennet or acids.

Code Date

A date stamped on a package of cheese that is used to determine the age and quality of the product. It may be a

Colby

A Wisconsin original created in Colby, Wisconsin. See Cheddar & Colby.

Cold Pack (Club Cheese)

A blend made from different batches of cheeses the same variety, or two or more varieties of mild and sharp natural cheese that have been ground (comminuted). Unlike processed cheese, Cold Pack is not heat-treated nor

Cold Performance

Addresses how the cheese responds to mechanical manipulation, such as cubing, shredding and grating. (Shredding produces short, thin strips of cheese. Grating shatters hard cheese into small granules.)

Color

The color of the rind and the interior of any cheese is an indication of its variety, condition and quality. In all cases, the color should be characteristic of the cheese type. Cheese colors naturally range from snow-white to deep yellow. Orange cheeses, such as Cheddar, are colored with annatto — a tasteless, odorless natural vegetable

Comminuted

Breaking down or grinding cheese into small particles through a mechanical, cutting action. Cheese that has been comminuted is used in the manufacture of Cold Pack cheese.

Consistency

The degree of hardness or softness of cheese. Classifications of cheese by consistency include soft, semi-soft,

Cooked

(1) Nearly all milk is heated or warmed to some degree during cheesemaking; however, the term cooked is reserved for those varieties whose curd is heated in order to regulate moisture content and degree of hardness. Parmesan curds, for example, are cooked at a higher temperature than Cheddar curds. (2) As a tasting term,

Cowy

See Barny or Barnyardy.

Cowy (Barny)

A descriptive term referring to strong farm-related aromas. Sometimes also called cowy. This characterization

Creams, Single, Double or Triple

A classification of cheese derived from the butterfat content on a dry matter basis. Single Creams contain at least 50% butterfat in the cheese solids (dry matter); Double Creams contain at least 60% butterfat; and Triple Creams

Creamy

(1) A descriptive term for cheese texture or taste. Creamy texture is soft, spreadable and, in some cases, runny. Creamy flavors are characterized as rich and are associated with cream-enriched cheeses, such as double or

Crock

A style term referencing the early days of Cold Pack cheese when it often was packaged in a glazed clay crock. Today, you may still find Cold Pack cheese packaged in such a container.

Crumbles

Some cheeses are impossible to shred or grate but will break apart into small sprinkle size portions. Crumbles is a style for cheeses, such as Feta and Blue, to use on salads, pizzas, etc.

Cubed

A cheese cube is a very small cut (six relatively equal sides) of cheese to induce consumption from a tray of

Culture

See Starter.

Culture (Starter)

A culture that normally consists of varying percentages of lactic acid, bacterial or mold spores, enzymes or other micro-organisms and natural chemicals. Starter cultures speed and control the process of curdling milk during cheesemaking in part by converting lactose to lactic acid. They also lend unique flavor characteristics to the

Cup

While the crock was Cold Pack's original package of choice, today you will find most products delivered to market in an 8- to 16-ounce plastic cup. Several crumbled products are taken to market in plastic cups as well.

Curd

Curdled milk from which cheese is made.

Curdling

See Coagulation.

Curdling (Coagulation)

A step in cheese manufacture when milk's protein, casein, is clotted by the action of rennet or acids.

Curing

The method, conditions and treatment from manufacturing to market, such as temperature, humidity and sanitation, that assist in giving the final cheese product the distinction of its variety. Sometimes used

Current (Young)

Generally semi-firm, firm or hard cheese varieties that have been cured for two weeks up to 30 days. Such

Cylinder/Log

Several types of cheeses are formed into this common style — a round face approximately 3 inches in diameter

Daisy

A cheese style, traditionally a 22-pound wheel of Cheddar, coated with wax and cheesecloth.

Defect

Any less-than-ideal quality factor in a cheese, often due to improper manufacture, handling or contamination.

Defects can refer to packaging, finish, surface, texture or taste.

Degree of Hardness

Categorizing cheese by the degree of hardness is the most universal method used. Federal Standards of Identity dictate the tolerances of moisture and milkfat that can be contained in cheese. Since the amount of moisture and fat in cheese significantly controls the properties of the cheese, using degrees of hardness stands on a legal

Deli or Mini Horn

Basically the same style as a cylinder of cheese. Most often you will find this style in Cheddar, Colby, Colby-Jack

Diced

Very small cubes. Mozzarella is diced as an additional style for foodservice operators. It is easier to portion

Direct Set

A cheese in which lactic acid culture instead of rennet is used to "direct set" or coagulate the milk.

Direct-set

A cheese in which lactic acid culture instead of rennet is used to direct-set or coagulate the milk.

Disk

A cheese set in a disk style, such as Brie or Camembert. This style allows for quick aging of the cheese, from the

Double Cream

The French term for cheese containing at least 60 percent butterfat in the cheese solids (dry matter).

Dry Matter

All the components of cheese (solids) excluding moisture (water). Dry matter includes proteins, milkfat, milk

Dutch-Type

A classification of cheese varieties that share similar characteristics, such as in methods of manufacture, consistency, texture, smell or taste, with cheeses produced in the Netherlands. Edam and Gouda are considered Dutch-type cheeses. Tilsit may appear under this classification, although it is not produced predominantly in

Earthy

A descriptive term for cheese varieties with rustic, hearty flavors and aromas. Cheese flavor compounds in this category share qualities with those present in freshly plowed earth or forest litter. Goat, sheep and monastery type

Emmentaler

The eyed cheese made in the Emme Valley, Switzerland, sometimes referred to as Swiss cheese.

Emulsifier

A substance or mixture used in the production of processed cheese to create its smooth body and texture. It is

Eye

A void or hole within cheese caused by the formation of trapped gas as a result of fermentation during the curing process. The presence of eyes is typical of Swiss-type cheeses and can range from pin size to pea size or larger.

Family (Group)

A term for cheese varieties that share similar characteristics.

Farmstead

A term describing cheese made on the farm from the milk of that farm.

Fat Content

The amount of butterfat/fat in any cheese. Fat content is determined by analyzing the fat in the dry matter of cheese. The fat is expressed as a percentage of the entire dry matter. In reference to cheese fat, milkfat and

Federal Standards of Identity

Describe the major varieties of cheese and identify the procedures by which they are manufactured, the ingredients they may contain and their moisture and milkfat. For types of cheese not defined by a generic name

Feed

A descriptive term for cheese that exhibits an odor or taste that is directly related to the particular feed consumed by a cow or other animal before milking. The aroma or flavor may be unpleasant if the feed was turnips, or

Ferme (Fermier)

The French term for farm-produced cheeses.

Fermented

An aroma reminiscent of alcohol fermentations.

Filled

A descriptive term for cheese from which all butterfat has been removed and in its place a vegetable oil has been used as a substitute. Filled cheese also is referred to as imitation.

Finish

(1) The process of finishing, refining or curing cheese to desired ripeness. Soft-ripened cheeses are sprayed on the surface with a harmless white mold (*Penicillium candidum*) whose growth helps ripen the cheese. Depending upon cheese variety, other finishing methods include washing the rinds of cheeses and the daily turning of cheeses. Temperature and humidity are tightly controlled during the finishing process. (2) Refers to the way a cheese is packaged, such as a hard, natural rind, a bandage of cheesecloth and wax or vacuum packaging. (3)

Firm (Hard)

A classification of cheese varieties exhibiting a relatively inelastic and unyielding texture like Asiago, Cotija and Parmesan. Federal Standards of Identity state that firm cheeses have a maximum moisture content of 34 percent

Fishy

A descriptive term referring to the unpleasant flavor of overripe, high-moisture cheese varieties. Often associated

Flaky

A descriptive term for cheese that breaks into flakes when cut. A flaky quality is typical of Parmesan, Romano, Asiago and Cheddar when aged over 10 to 12 months.

Flat

(1) A descriptive term for tasteless cheese that normally yields a distinct flavor. Cheese with reduced levels of sodium and salt is often referred to as flat. (2) A style of Cheddar weighing from 35 to 37 pounds that has been

Flavor

A general term for the taste cheese presents as it is eaten. Flavor is detected in the mouth and also by the nose. Flavors, in order of ascending aggressiveness, are described as faint (fleeting), mild (light or bland), pronounced (distinct) or strong (intense). Flavors may also be described by the tastes they resemble, such as nutty, salty,

Fondu

The French word for Process cheese. This term should not be confused with Fondue, a Swiss dish often made

Fondue

A Swiss dish often made with cheese.

Force Ripening

A method of speeding the ripening of a cheese by using a warmer environment than normal to naturally ripen the cheese. The cheese may be force ripened at room temperature or in a cooler set at a higher than normal temperature. Ripening may also be accelerated by modifying the enzymes. These cheeses are used primarily in

Foreign Flavor

See Chemical.

Foreign Flavor (Chemical)

A descriptive term for a cheese aroma or flavor taint which usually indicates improper manufacturing or

Formaggio

The Italian word for cheese.

Fresh

A term typically used to classify cheese varieties that have not been cured, such as Mascarpone, Cottage cheese, Cream cheese or Ricotta. Cheeses that have been cured for very short periods, such as Feta, may also be

Fresh Mozzarella

A soft Mozzarella with a high-moisture content, meant to be eaten soon after it is produced. In Italy, balls (Bocconcini) of Fresh Mozzarella are stored in water and usually consumed the same day they are made. Due to

Fromage

The French word for cheese.

Fromager

A French word to describe a person with in-depth knowledge of cheese. Sometimes spelled Fromagier.

Fruity

A descriptive term for the sweet, fragrant aroma or flavor characteristic of certain semi-soft cheeses, such as Pouy De Montagne or American Muenster, and some hard mountain cheese varieties. Baby Swiss and some

Gamey

A descriptive term for cheeses with strong flavors and penetrating aromas.

Gassy

A descriptive term for cheeses in packaging that becomes bloated. This may be a result of an increase in holding temperature or altitude, or it may indicate microbial production of carbon dioxide.

Gem

A style of Cheddar weighing approximately 3 pounds.

Giganti

A very large style of Provolone, typically weighing 200 to 600 pounds and measuring up to approximately 7 feet in

Goat

A classification of cheese made from goat's milk.

Goaty

Distinctive flavor of cheeses made from goat's milk.

Gouda and Edam

A category of cheeses referred to as sweet curd cheese.

Grainy

(1) A descriptive term for gritty texture which is desirable in certain hard-grating cheeses, though not to the point of mealiness. Parmesan and Romano exhibit a granular or grainy texture. (2) A flavor term that may be used to

Grana

The Italian term for hard-grating cheese referring to a cheese's hard granular texture. Parmesan, Romano, Asiago, Parmigiano-Reggiano, Grana Padano and Sapsago are among the grana-type cheese varieties.

Grassy

A descriptive term for cheese with a weedy taste that is related to the type of feed a cow has consumed prior to milking, such as silage, bitterweed, leeks or onions. See Feed.

Grated

With hard cheeses, such as Parmesan, Romano and Asiago, fracturing the cheese into tiny particles is a common style choice. This allows the user to sprinkle the cheese on top of a dish like seasoning.

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Imitation Pasteurized Process Cheese Spread

A cheese that possesses all the properties of pasteurized process cheese spread except the butterfat content is significantly lower than federal standards allow for labeling as a cheese spread.

Individual Portion Pack

Individual packs are great for airlines, consumers to take on picnics or pack into a to-go meal. Just a few years ago, you could only find Cream cheese in this size. Many natural cheese products are now taking advantage of

Intense

A descriptive term for cheese with strong, concentrated aromas and flavors.

Kaas

The Dutch word for cheese.

Käse

The German word for cheese.

Lactic

(1) A general description applied to cheese exhibiting a clean, wholesome, milky and slightly acidic flavor or aroma. (2) The type of organisms included in starter cultures for cheesemaking.

Lactose

Natural sugar found in most milks.

Lactose Intolerance

A human condition in which the digestive system is not able to properly break down the natural sugar found in milk and dairy products. Common symptoms tend to be excessive gas and/or diarrhea.

Lipase

(1) An enzyme found in raw milk, also produced by microorganisms that split fat molecules into fatty acids. (2) Lipase flavor is a term also used to describe rancidity, especially where these flavors are desired in cheeses. See

Loaf

This rectangular-shaped style is the standard 5- to 9-pound cut with a 4- by 4-inch face, ideal for deli slicing and consumers or chefs to use in their sandwich creations.

Log

See Cylinder/Log.

Longhorn

A style of cheese, usually Colby or Colby-Jack, weighing approximately 12 to 13 pounds, cylindrical with a 6-inch

Make Procedure

The recipe and procedural steps to make cheese.

Make Time

The period of time required to turn raw milk into finished cheese, ready to go to a curing room.

Mammoth

A style of cheese, usually Cheddar, weighing between 75 and 2,000 pounds.

Mandarini

A Provolone style that weighs approximately 20 to 25 pounds and resembles the shape of an egg. Ropes are tied

Marc

The white brandy or eau de vie made from grape pomace. Marc may be used as a solution for curing washed-rind

Matieres Grasses

The French term for milkfat in dry matter.

Mechanical Holes

Small, irregular openings in the body of cheese caused by manufacturing methods, not by gas fermentation.

Colby, Brick, Muenster and Monterey Jack are varieties with natural, mechanical openings. See Open.

Mechanical Manipulation

The various methods of handling cheese during preparation (i.e., shredding, grating, slicing with a knife, slicing on

Medium-aged (Mellow)

Generally semi-firm, firm or hard cheeses that have been cured for three to six months. Medium-aged cheeses are usually mellow and smooth textured. Frequently used to describe Cheddars.

Midget

A style of cheese, usually Cheddar, weighing approximately 12 pounds.

Mild (Young)

A descriptive term for light, unpronounced flavors. Mild also refers to young, briefly-aged Cheddars.

Milkfat Content

The fat content of cheese expressed as a percentage of the total cheese weight. Milkfat content depends upon the richness of milk used in cheesemaking and how much moisture is lost during ripening. Synonymous with

Milkfat in the Dry Matter (FDM)

The fat content of cheese expressed as a percentage of the total solids of cheese. Most cheeses are in the range of 45 to 55 percent milkfat in the dry matter because the dry matter stays constant in a unit of cheese while

Mini Horn

See Deli or Mini Horn.

Moisture Content

See Fat Content.

Moisture Content (Fat Content)

The amount of butterfat/fat in any cheese. Fat content is determined by analyzing the fat in the dry matter of cheese. The fat is expressed as a percentage of the entire dry matter. In reference to cheese fat, milkfat and

Mold

(1) A condition created by the growth of various fungi during ripening, contributing to the individual character of cheese. Surface molds ripen from the rind inward. Internal molds, such as those used for Blue-veined cheeses, ripen throughout the cheese. A moldy character can be clean and attractive, or unpleasantly musty or

Monastery-type

A term used to classify cheeses that originated and are still produced in the monasteries of France, such as Port du Salut. Monastery-type also refers to other cheese varieties with similar attributes and may also include a

Mottled

A defect in cheese appearance characterized by an irregular, splotchy color on the rind or interior.

Mouthfeel

See Texture.

Mouthfeel (Texture)

A general term for the "fabric" or "feel" of cheese when touched, tasted or cut. Characteristics of cheese texture may be smooth, grainy, open or closed, creamy, flaky, dense, crumbly and so forth, depending upon the specific

Mushroomy

A descriptive term for ripened cheese, such as Brie, with an aroma and flavor similar to the clean, pleasant fragrance of mushrooms. The flavor is produced by the surface mold that is related to commercial mushrooms. A mushroom aroma may be detected in other soft or semi-soft varieties. This aroma is also referred to as mildly

Natural

(1) A general classification for cheese that is made directly from milk. Whether the milk is pasteurized or unpasteurized has no bearing on the designation as natural. (2) Refers to the cheesemaking process whereby cheese is made directly from milk by coagulating or curdling the milk, stirring and heating the curd, draining the

Natural Rind

A rind that develops naturally on the cheese exterior through drying while ripening without the aid of ripening agents or washing. Most semi-hard or hard cheeses have natural rinds that may be thin like that of bandaged

Naturally Bandaged

Cheddar cheeses wrapped in cheesecloth and dipped in wax. Prior to vapor-barrier film, this method provided the only way to store Cheddar cheese for storage and shipping. Examples of styles of naturally bandaged Cheddars

Nutty

A descriptive term for cheese with a nut-like flavor, a characteristic of Swiss types. Cheddars may exhibit a flavor reminiscent of walnuts; fresh goat cheese and Gruyère are said to resemble the taste of hazelnuts. The flavor

Off

A term referring to undesirable flavors or odors too faint or ill-defined to be more precisely characterized.

Oil Off

Refers to the separation of oil when cheese melts.

Oily

A descriptive term that may refer to body, aroma and flavor. Cheese held out of refrigeration for extended periods

Open

A term applied to cheese varieties containing small, mechanical holes that develop as a result of the manufacturing process. The holes may be small or large, densely patterned or randomly scattered, and irregular in shape. The blue mold that grows in Blue-veined cheeses forms around the openings in the lightly pressed curd. Air is introduced through punctures made with steel pins into the cheese (see Mechanical Holes). Pin holes are

Ost

The Scandinavian word for cheese.

Ovalini

A Fresh Mozzarella ball shape that weighs approximately 4 ounces.

Overripe

A term descriptive of cheese that has passed its ideal state of flavor development or that has become too soft.

Pack Date

A code date put on cheese to indicate the date the cheese was packed by the manufacturer.

Pail

For practical and economic reasons, getting products in an industrial-size container is the way to go. Products packed this way are typically heading for a commercial kitchen.

Paneer

A fresh cheese originally from India. A farmerstyle cheese that would typically be unsalted. This cheese is acid set and has vegetarian appeal because of the lack of animal rennet. The texture is similar to Queso Blanco.

Paraffin

A wax coating applied to the rinds of some cheese varieties for both protection during export and extended life spans. Paraffin may be clear, black, brown, yellow or red.

Part-skim

A term used to denote the manufacture of a cheese, such as Mozzarella, with partly skimmed milk. This yields a lower-fat cheese that may have desirable properties compared to the full-fat cheeses. See Skimmed Milk.

Pasta Filata

Translated literally from Italian, to spin paste or threads. Pasta Filata refers to a type of cheese where curds are heated and then stretched or kneaded before being molded into the desired shape. The resulting cheese has great elasticity and stretches when cooked or melted. Cheeses in this family include Mozzarella, Provolone and

Paste

A descriptive term for the interior texture of soft-ripened cheeses, such as Brie, that exhibit a semi-soft to runny

Pasteurization

The process of heating milk to a specific temperature for a specific period of time in order to destroy any disease-producing bacteria, also checking the activity of fermentative bacteria.

Pasteurized Process Cheese

A blend of fresh and aged, natural cheeses that have been shredded, mixed and heated (cooked) with an addition of an emulsifier salt, after which no further ripening occurs.

Pasteurized Process Cheese Food

A variation of Pasteurized Process cheese containing less fat and a higher moisture content. It differs from Process cheese in that either nonfat dry milk or whey solids and water have been added, thus reducing the

Pasteurized Process Cheese Spread

A variation of Pasteurized Process cheese containing a higher moisture content and lower milkfat content than Process Cheese Food. A stabilizer is added to prevent separation of ingredients.

Pasture-grazed

A term describing cheese made exclusively from the seasonal milk of pasture-grazed animals.

Pear

A Provolone style that weighs between 20 and 40 pounds and resembles the shape of a pear. Ropes are tied

Penicillium

Principal genus of fungi used to develop molds on certain cheese varieties during ripening. *Penicillium candidum* is used to develop many soft-ripened cheeses, such as Brie; *Penicillium glaucum* or *roqueforti* are used for

Peppery

A descriptive term for cheese with a sharp, pepper flavor. Aged Cheddar may be described as peppery.

Performance

Refers to the way a particular type or variety of cheese responds to handling during preparation, from mechanical manipulation (e.g., slicing, shredding, grating, etc.) in its cold state, to the quality of the cheese's response to heating (e.g., characteristics such as melting, stretching, browning, etc.). Performance also describes how

Persille

The French translation for parsleyed, which refers to delicately veined Blue varieties, such as Roquefort,[®] Blue and Stilton,[®] where the mold resembles sprigs of parsley.

Pickled Cheese

A term used to classify cheeses that are stored and packed in a brine solution, such as Feta.

Piquant

A descriptive term for cheese with an appealing sharpness, flavor or aroma. Aged Asiago, Aged Provolone, and Blue-veined cheeses are sometimes described by this term.

Plastic Curd

A classification of cheeses whose curd is heated and then kneaded to form various shapes. The Italian term for these cheese varieties is Pasta Filata. Mozzarella, Provolone and String are plastic curd-type cheeses and may

Pressed Cheese

A descriptive term for cheese whose curd has been placed in a mold and literally pressed to form the intended shape of the finished cheese. Fresh, uncured cheese varieties, such as Cream or Feta, and cured cheeses, such

Print

A rectangular style of cheese that has been cut from a 40-pound block. Prints are normally 10-pound loaves.

Process Cheese

See Pasteurized Process Cheese.

Process Cheese (Pasteurized Process Cheese)

A blend of fresh and aged natural cheeses that have been shredded, mixed, and heated (cooked) with an addition of an emulsifier salt, after which no further ripening occurs.

Pronounced

A descriptive term for cheese that exhibits a distinct aroma or flavor stronger than mild but not as powerful as

Pull Date

A code date stamped on cheese to indicate when the product should be removed from stock as being too old.

Pungent

A descriptive term for cheese with an especially poignant aroma or sharp, penetrating flavor. Limburger cheese

Quarter Wheel

Cheese manufacturers cut 20-pound wheels or larger into four quarters for more efficient use by the end user.

Queijo

The Portuguese word for cheese.

Queso

The Spanish word for cheese.

Rancid

A term relating to flavors caused by lipase enzymes releasing fatty acids from butterfat. Some cheeses are not supposed to have flavors caused by fatty acids in high concentrations, such as Cheddar, while others, such as Romano, gain much of their flavor from the rancidity of fatty acids. In many dairy flavors, excessive rancidity is

Raw Milk

Milk that has not undergone pasteurization.

rBGH/Recombinant Bovine Growth Hormone

A synthetic version of BGH used in dairy cows to aid in the increase of milk production.

Rennet

An extract from the membranes of calves' stomachs that contains rennin, an enzyme that aids in coagulating milk or separating curds from whey. Rennet-like enzymes, also used commercially, are produced by selected fungi

Rind

The outer surface of cheese. A rind varies in texture, thickness and color. Cheeses may be rindless, display natural rinds or possess rinds that are produced by harmless mold. See Bloomy Rind and Natural Rind.

Rindless

Cheese without a rind. Some rindless varieties, such as Brick and Colby, are ripened (cured) in plastic film or other protective coating to prevent rind formation. Some cheeses, such as Feta, are rindless because they are not

Ripe

A descriptive term for cheese that has arrived at peak flavor through aging. The optimum period of aging varies

Ripening

The chemical and physical alteration of cheese during the curing process. See Aging and Curing.

Robust

A descriptive term for cheese with a very strong aroma and full flavor.

Round

See Ball/Round.

Rubbery

A term characterizing the resilient feel and texture of a cheese. Generally a term for cheese that is overly chewy

Runny

A descriptive term for cheeses that have returned to a partially liquid state as a result of insufficient drainage of whey or exposure to excessive heat. Soft-ripened cheese varieties often become runny at the peak of ripeness or

Rustic

A descriptive term for cheese with a hearty or earthy flavor and distinct aroma. Country or mountain cheeses are

Salami

A Provolone style resembling a small to large log, ranging in size from 13 to 100 pounds.

Salamini

Similar to a Provolone Salami, the Salamini is smaller — 1 or 8 pounds in size — and tied off with ropes for

Salting

A step in the cheesemaking process requiring the addition of salt. Depending upon the cheese variety, salt can be added while the cheese is in curd form or rubbed on the cheese after it is pressed. Salt is used to help preserve cheese, as well as to enhance its flavor. Cheese also may be soaked in a salt solution, a process termed brining.

Salty

Most cheeses possess some degree of saltiness. Pronounced saltiness is characteristic of specific varieties; however, excessive saltiness is a defect. Cheeses lacking in salt are described as dull or flat.

Satiny

A descriptive term referring to the texture and mouthfeel of soft, spreadable cheese varieties. A satiny texture is characteristic of perfectly ripened Brie. Also referred to as a smooth, silky texture.

Sell-by Date

A code date put on cheese by the manufacturer to indicate the date recommended that the cheese be sold to the

Semi-hard

A classification of cheese based upon body. Cheddar, Colby, Edam and Gouda are examples of semi-hard

Semi-soft

A wide variety of cheeses made with whole milk. Cheeses in this category include Monterey Jack, Brick, Muenster, Fontina and Havarti, and melt well when cooked.

Sharp

A descriptive flavor term referring to the fully developed flavor of aged cheeses, such as Cheddar, Provolone and some Blue-veined varieties. The flavor is actually sharp and biting, but not excessively acrid or sour.

Sheep

A classification of cheese made from ewe's milk.

Sheepy

Characteristic flavor of some cheeses made from ewe's milk.

Shredded

A very popular style or form with many varieties of cheese. Manufacturers now make standard, small strip shreds to fancy, very fine strip shreds of cheese. This form is ideal when cooking with cheese.

Silky

See Satiny.

Silky (Satiny)

A descriptive term referring to the texture and "mouthfeel" of soft, spreadable cheese varieties. A satiny texture is characteristic of perfectly ripe Brie. Also referred to as a smooth, silky texture.

Skimmed Milk

The milk that remains after all or part of the cream containing the fat has been removed.

Sliced

Another popular style or form of cheese is the slice. First incorporated into the world of American Pasteurized Process cheese, you can now find hundreds of natural cheese varieties in this form.

Smoked Cheese

Cheese that has been smoked in a process similar to smoking meat. Methods for smoking cheese include the addition of liquid smoke to the brine or smoking over woodchips. Smoked Cheddar, Swiss and Provolone yield a

Soapy

Descriptive of a taste caused by long-chain fatty acids sometimes present in cheese caused by excessive milkfat

Soft-fresh

A category of cheeses with high moisture content that are typically direct set with the addition of lactic acid cultures. Cheeses in this category include Cottage cheese, Cream cheese and Neufchatel, Feta, Mascarpone,

Soft-ripened

A classification of cheese based upon body. Brie and Camembert are examples of soft-ripened cheese varieties.

Soft/Fresh

A category of cheeses with high-moisture content that are typically direct-set with the addition of lactic acid cultures. Cheeses in this category include Cottage cheese, Cream cheese and Neufchâtel, Feta, Mascarpone,

Solids

See Dry Matter.

Solids (Dry Matter)

All the components of cheese (solids) excluding moisture (water). Dry matter includes proteins, milkfat, milk

Sour

A descriptive term for cheese with an excessive acid content. However, a mild, tangy, sour flavor can be attractive in young cheeses. Tartness is the same as sourness in flavors.

Sour Milk

Milk made acidic by fermentation. The predominant acid formed is lactic acid. See Lactic and Starter.

Sour Milk Cheese

Cheese that has been curdled (coagulated) by natural souring or by the addition of lactic acid bacteria, such as Cottage cheese. Sour milk cheese does not use rennet for coagulation.

Specialty Cheese

A subjective term used to classify cheeses of exceptional quality, notably unique or produced in quantities of less than 40 million pounds per year. Cheeses that are combinations of different cheese types also may be referred to as specialty. For example, Blue/Brie is a soft-ripened specialty cheese with a blue vein mold throughout.

Spiced

A term sometimes used to classify all cheese varieties containing spices, herbs or flavorings. For example,

Spicy

A descriptive term for cheese varieties with a peppery, herby flavor.

Springy

A descriptive term for cheese with a resilient texture that springs back when gently pressed. Ripe or nearly ripe,

Stabilizer

An ingredient added to a product to bind water, improve consistency or stabilize an emulsion. Examples include whey protein concentrate (WPC), gelatin, xanthan gum, guar gum and locust bean gum.

Starter

A culture that normally consists of varying percentages of lactic acid, bacterial or mold spores, enzymes or other microorganisms and natural chemicals. Starter cultures speed and control the process of curdling milk during cheesemaking in part by converting lactose to lactic acid. They also lend unique flavor characteristics to the

Stick

See Chunk/Bar.

String Like (Plastic Curd)

A classification of cheeses whose curd is heated and then kneaded to form various shapes. The Italian term for these cheese varieties is pasta filata. Mozzarella, Provolone, and String cheese are plastic-curd type cheeses and

String-like

See Plastic Curd.

String/Rope

Small cylinders of typically Mozzarella or Provolone. This snack-style cheese is very popular to use in school

Strong

A descriptive term for cheese with a pronounced or penetrating flavor and aroma.

Style

A classification of cheese based upon its shape, size and packaging.

Supple

A term describing the body of certain cheeses when handled. Supple cheese varieties, such as Fontina, are

Surface-ripened

A term referring to cheese that ripens from the exterior when a harmless mold, yeast or bacteria is applied to the surface. Bloomy-rind cheeses, like Brie and Camembert, and washed-rind cheeses, like Limburger, are both

Swiss-type

A term used to classify cheeses that share the common characteristics of eyes (holes) in their interior. Eyes develop during the curing process when gas, formed through fermentation, is trapped and expands, thus forming holes. The size of eyes can range from small as a pea in Baby Swiss to the larger holes typical of Aged Swiss.

Texture

A general term for the fabric or feel of cheese when touched, tasted or cut. Characteristics of cheese texture may be smooth, grainy, open or closed, creamy, flaky, dense, crumbly and so forth, depending upon the specific

Thermalization

The process of heat-treating milk to less than 160°F for less than 15 seconds prior to cheese production. This process utilizes a lower temperature for a shorter period of time than pasteurization.

Tome

This French word for cheese is native to the Haute Savoie section of France. The word precedes the names of certain cheeses, such as Tome de Savoie or Tome de Beaumont. The Tomes have much in common with the

Tomme

Sometimes spelled Tome, this French word for cheese is native to the Haute Savoie section of France. The word precedes the names of certain cheeses such as Tomme de Savoie or Tomme de Beaumont. The Tommes have

Triple Cream

The French term for cheese which contains over 72 percent butterfat in the cheese solids. See Creams and Fat

Tub

A similar form to the cup, only shorter in height and typically wider in circumference.

Turophile

A lover of cheese. Taken from the Greek word turos (cheese) and the root phil (love).

Type

A term used to classify or categorize cheeses that share common characteristics, such as degree of firmness, texture, flavor and manufacturing procedure, with a widely known and established cheese variety.

Ultra Pasteurization

Also referred to as UHT. The process of super-heating milk to 275°F for 4 to 15 seconds.

US RDA

The abbreviation for United States Recommended Daily Allowance referring to the nutritional contributions foods,

Variety

The generic name of a cheese by which it is most commonly identified, such as Cheddar, Colby, Blue, etc.

Washed-rind

A cheese rind that has been washed periodically with brine, whey, beer, cider, wine, brandy or oil during ripening. The rind is kept moist to encourage the growth of an orange-red bacteria. The bacteria may be scraped off, dried or left to further rind development. Washed-rind and bloomy-rind cheeses compose what is termed the soft-

Waxed

Prior to airtight shrink bags, cheesemakers would wrap their cheese in cheesecloth and dip in wax for preservation. Many wax colors denote some attribute of that cheese. For example, with Cheddar: clear = mild, red

Waxy

A term describing the wax-like appearance of a cheese body, or its texture, when tasted or cut. See Texture.

Wedge

A cut form, usually in a cake or pie-style wedge, from a wheel of cheese. Many varieties of cheese use this style

Weeping

A descriptive term referring to Swiss-type cheeses whose eyes glisten with bits of moisture. This is caused by the release of moisture by proteins as they are broken down during ripening. Weeping often indicates that a cheese has achieved peak ripeness and will exhibit full flavor. Can also be caused by storing cheese at too warm a

Wheel/Round

A circular style or form that is usually flat on the top and bottom.

Whey

(1) The thin, watery part of milk that separates from the coagulated curds during the first step of the cheesemaking process. It still contains most of the milk sugar or lactose found in milk. (2) A classification of cheeses made predominantly from the whey obtained during the manufacture of other cheeses like Gjetost.

Whole Milk

Milk that is neither skimmed nor enriched with extra cream.

Wisconsin State Brand/Wisconsin Grade A

These interchangeable grades appear on American cheeses and meet the state's highest quality and standards.

Wrapping

The exterior material used to enclose or cover cheese for protection and storage. Examples of wrapping material

Young

See Current.

Young (Current)

Generally semi-firm, firm or hard cheese varieties that have been cured for two weeks up to 30 days. Such