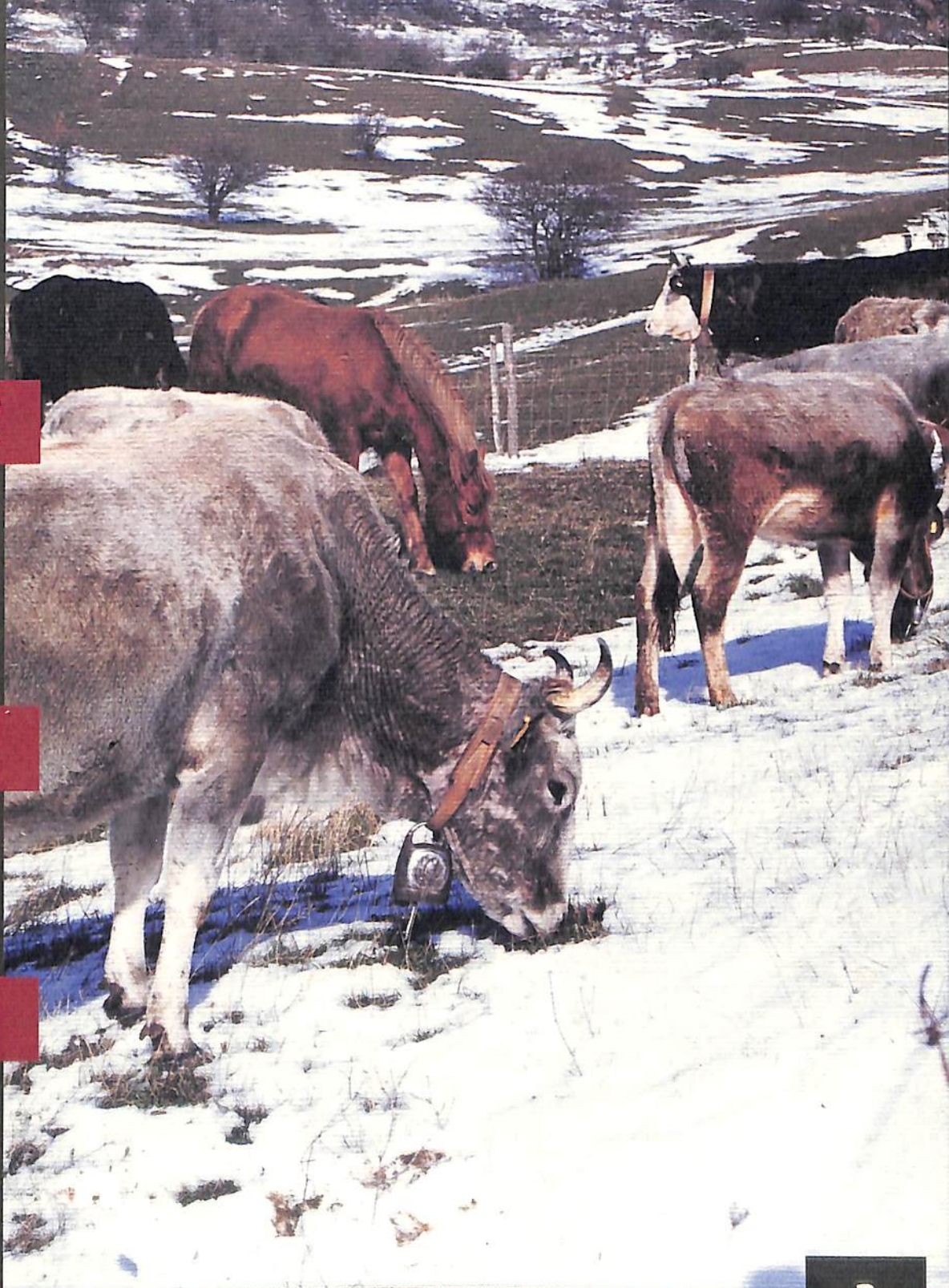




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Preliminary results of the characterisation of a typical Piedmont's ricotta Cheese

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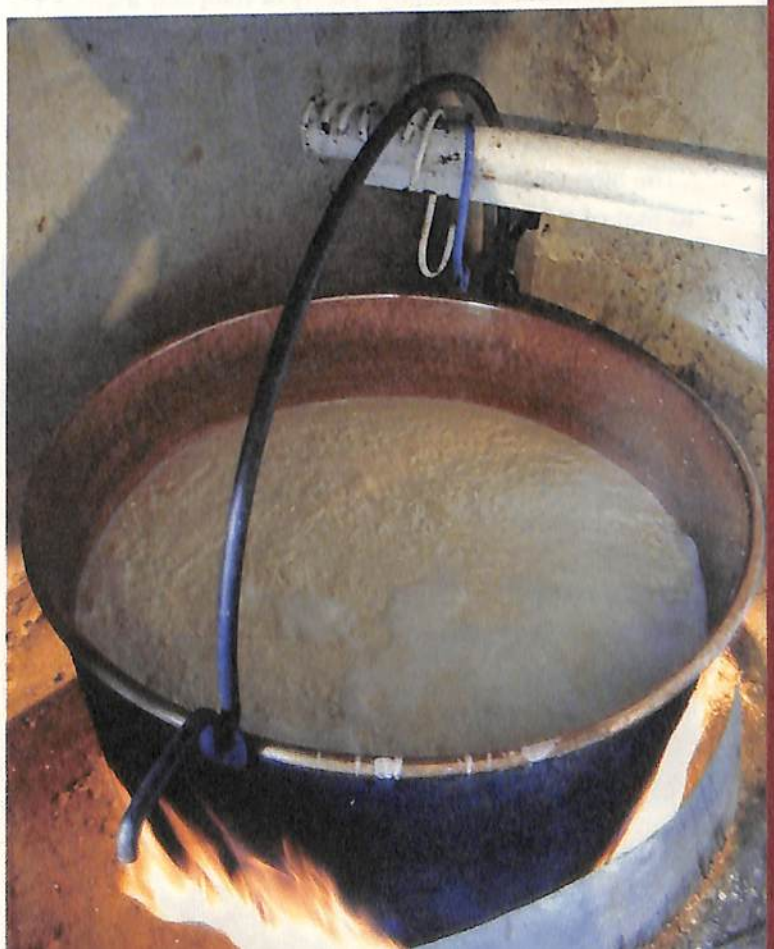
Generally ricotta cheese is considered a cheesemaking by-product for fresh consumption. In Piedmont, as in other Italian areas, besides these ricotta cheeses for fresh consumption, some ricotta cheeses are produced for maturing. One of these, known as *Sarass del Fen* is produced exclusively in the alpine valleys of Pinerolo (TO) using the whey of a mixture of cow, ewe and goat milk, matured for 20 days to 4 months and wrapped during the ripening, following tradition, in characteristic hay from local alpine pastures.

The aim of this work was to define the production technology and the chemical composition of *Sarass del Fen* to support the request for Brand Denomination.

CHEESEMAKING

The *Sarass del Fen* is produced with cow whey (90-100%) and ewe or goat whey (0-10%). For cheesemaking the whey is heated at 60 °C, 5-10% raw milk is added then heated to 80-85 °C. Once this temperature is reached the whey is coagulated with citric acid or magnesium sulphate. When the curd is formed the whey-curd mixture is further heated to 90-95 °C, then the curd is finally removed, salted and placed in linen cloths. These bags are hung for 24-48 h forming the characteristic half-sphere shape of the product. At the end of this time the

ricotta cheese is removed from the linen cloths, if necessary salted dry and ripened for at least 20 d at 8-12 °C in curing rooms. It is during this ripening time that ricotta cheese is wrapped with special hay produced in mountain pastures. Throughout the cheesemaking world this operation is very distinct and unique to *Sarass del Fen*.



Highland Cheeses



The *Sarass del Fen* is a ricotta cheeses produced exclusively in the alpine valleys of Pinerolo (TO), using the whey of a mixture of cow, ewe and goat milk, matured for 20 days to 4 months and wrapped during the ripening

CHEMICAL CHARACTERISATION

Although *Sarass del Fen* has been traditionally produced for ages, there are no reports concerning its composition values.

In this work the preliminary results for 18 samples 30 d of ripening were reported (Table 1).

Generally the dry matter content is as high as the fat content. This is due to the use of high quantities of ewe and goat milk, fine-cut curd or the addition of cream to the whey. The ash content is very high which is mainly formed by sodium chloride used for flavour and preservation.

Soluble protein content is very variable and this is due to a different ripening of products. There are several reasons for this (the microbiological quality of milk and then of whey, the temperature and the time of the heating of the whey, the salt quantity, the ripening conditions).

Acidity is low because there are no lactic bacteria and also the carbohydrate content is very low.

The high value of total calories is significant if compared to that of a fresh ricotta.

Table 1 - Gross composition of 18 *Sarass del Fen* produced in alpine farms with 30 days of ripening (X: mean; σ : standard deviation)

	X	σ
Dry matter (%)	52.22	7.44
Fat (% dm)	63.6	7.4
Protein (% dm)	28.1	5.26
Ash (% dm)	5.5	1.8
Soluble protein (% dm)	3.8	2.2
Acidity (meq)	4.1	3.2
Carbohydrate (% dm)	2.8	2.3
Sodium chloride (%)	1.02	0.3
Calories per 100 g	359	86

(dm: dry matter)

