

THE OXFORD COMPANION TO
CHEESE

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Foreword by

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is an edible, sticky, blue-gray rind with some white mold, which is intrinsic to the cheese, contributing to the breakdown of the curd and adding flavor and complexity.

Cashel Blue is smaller than most blues, and so it ripens more quickly. At around six to ten weeks old, it is firm yet moist and creamy edged. By twelve weeks, its true character starts to emerge; the flavor becomes rounder and spicy, and the texture softens. By six months, the curd will have broken down completely and starts to collapse.

See also IRELAND and STEELE, VERONICA.

Cashel Farmhouse Cheesemakers. <http://www.cashelblue.com>.

Juliet Harbutt

Casieddu is an Italian spherical goat cheese with a diameter of 3–4 inches (8–10 centimeters). An artisanal seasonal product, it is made only between the months of July and September, when sheep's milk is unavailable but goat's milk is still plentiful. The cheese is produced in the four districts of Castelsaraceno, Grumento Nova, Lauria, and Moliterno, in the southern Italian region of Basilicata. The production technology is the same as for Cacioricotta: raw goat's milk is coagulated by kid or lamb rennet and heated to 185–194°F (85–90°C). The only differences are that the milk is filtered through a layer of intertwined ferns, and then a handful of an herb called nepeta (*Calamintha nepeta savi*) is mixed with the milk as it is heated. It is the addition of this aromatic plant belonging to the Labiates family, rich in antioxidant substances, that gives the cheese its extremely delicate taste.

Casieddu is a complementary product to Canestrato di Moliterno cheese (mixed sheep and goat cheese). It is wrapped in fern leaves, which are intertwined at the bottom and tied with a reed or a broom branch at the top. Typically, Casieddu cheese is sold directly from the farm or small dairy. But it is also sold at local markets, especially to people from the production area who return to visit for summer vacation.

In general, Casieddu, eaten fresh, is characterized by a high quantity of water (about 60 percent). It has two prevailing aromas, cooking and mint, which result respectively from heating the milk at a high temperature and from the addition of nepeta. The

ferns used to filter the milk give the cheese a slightly bitter taste. The estimated annual production of Casieddu, which has decreased in the early twenty-first century, is about 1.5 to 2 tons.

See also CACIORICOTTA and CANESTRATO DI MOLITERNO.

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Salvatore Claps

Castelmagno is a semihard cheese from the Piedmont region of Italy that has an unusual crumbly texture and sometimes shows blue veining with age. Castelmagno PDO is produced in only three towns of Cuneo province (Castelmagno, Pradleves, and Monterosso Grana) with partially skimmed raw cow's milk from the Piedmont breed, sometimes with added ewe's or goat's milk (maximum 20 percent). Each year about 250 tons are produced.

Evidence that Castelmagno cheese was already known in medieval times can be found in a text dated 1277, where it is reported that a quantity of Castelmagno was paid to the Marquis of Saluzzo for the use of pastures in the Castelmagno and Celle di Macra area. Castelmagno PDO can boast the mention "Prodotto della Montagna" (mountain product) and can be named "di Alpeggio" when it is produced over 1,000 meters above sea level. The Castelmagno DOP Prodotto della Montagna has a blue label, while the Castelmagno PDO di Alpeggio has a green label.

After milk coagulation, the curd is broken down to the size of a hazelnut, then extracted and left to drain for about twenty-four hours. At the end of draining the curd is cut into slices and immersed in tanks with serum for three to seven days, then finely chopped. The chopped curd is salted, put in molds, and pressed for twenty-four to forty-eight hours. The cheese is dry-salted and left to ripen for a minimum of sixty days, but can be ripened for six

months and beyond in natural caves. Castelmagno PDO has a cylindrical form with flat faces, a diameter of 6–10 inches (15–25 centimeters), an edge of 6–10 inches (15–25 centimeters) and a weight of 4–15 pounds (2–7 kilograms). The crust is wrinkled, hard, and reddish-gray. The dough is white or ivory-white without holes.

In aged traditional cheeses, greenish-blue veins can be present when air has entered and facilitated mold growth. Some producers intentionally pierce the wheels to ensure some development of blue veining. The texture is hard, compact, and typically very friable (easily crumbled). The odor is fine and delicate or somewhat acidic in fresher cheese, strong and persistent in aged cheese. Especially in older cheeses the taste is very savory and salty. It is both a table cheese, suitable on its own or paired with honey or chutney, and a grating cheese that goes well with many traditional Italian dishes, such as over gnocchi or Piedmontese egg noodles, or in the filling of ravioli.

See also ITALY.

Assopiemonte DOP & IGP. <http://www.assopiemonte.com>.

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Giuseppe Zeppa

Castelo Branco is a round Portuguese cheese ranging from semisoft to hard, if cured for at least ninety days, and made with raw sheep's milk coagulated by a milk-clotting enzyme found in the artichoke thistle, *Cynara cardunculus*. (The same plant is used in the production of Serra da Estrela PDO cheese from the Iberian Peninsula. See PLANT-DERIVED COAGULANTS and SERRA DA ESTRELA.) Castelo Branco is one of three Portuguese PDO cheeses produced in Beira Baixa province in the central part of the country. It varies from 28–45 ounces (794–1,276 grams); smaller samples of the

same cheese, called Merendeiras, vary from 12–19 ounces (340–539 grams). Its color is from light yellow to orange, with small holes inside. As it warms to room temperatures it becomes spreadable.

The Castelo Branco municipality, together with Idanha-a-Nova, Fundão, Covilha, Belmonte and Penamacor, belongs to a region between Serra da Estrela and Alentejo, where the mountains thin to become the plains that characterize the landscape of southern Portugal. Traditionally these vast lands were divided into large farms, sparsely populated, with holm and cork oaks dominating the scenery, along with Bordaleira and Merino breeds of sheep. In the early twentieth century, cheese production was focused on the domestic consumption and cheese was rarely exported. By that time, producing and maturing processes followed different patterns from each place, so the quality was heterogeneous. When Portugal entered the European Union, the process for making Castelo Branco was standardized in order to obtain the PDO. Artisan producers are scarce nowadays, with most of the production concentrated in factories, such as Damar, and co-op farms.

Other cheeses from the same region are the semihard-to-hard Queijo Amarelo de Beira Baixa (yellow cheese of Beira Baixa), made with a mixture of sheep's and goat's milk and coagulated with animal rennet, and gray-white colored Picante de Beira Baixa (Spicy of Beira Baixa), also produced with mixed milk (more goat's than sheep's), and animal rennet.

See also PORTUGAL.

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Olivia Fraga

Cato, Marcus Porcius (234 B.C.E.–149 B.C.E.) was a Roman statesman, historian, and landowner who authored a farming handbook, *De Agricultura*,