







# Cheese - A Versatile Dairy Product with Many Varieties

## The History of Cheese

Cheese has a long history dating back thousands of years. Some of the earliest evidence of fromage making has been found in Mesopotamia (modern day Iraq) from around 3500 BC. The earliest fromages were likely created by accident when milk was stored in animal stomachs that contained rennet, an enzyme needed to curdle milk. Over time, nomadic groups discovered how to intentionally make fromage and the practice spread throughout Europe, Asia, and Africa. By the time the Roman Empire arose, fromage making was an established practice and many classical Roman recipes have survived to modern times.

## The Basic Cheese Making Process

All fromage starts with milk. Rennet or bacterial cultures are added to milk which causes it to separate into solid curds and liquid [Cheese](#). The curds are then drained, pressed, salted, and aged to develop flavor. The type of milk, cultures, coagulants, aging process and other factors determine the final characteristics of each fromage variety. Cow, goat and sheep milks are most commonly used but some unusual fromages even incorporate buffalo, yak or reindeer milk. Variations in these basic methods give rise to the incredible diversity of over 1,000 distinct fromage types around the world.

## Popular Fresh Cheeses

Fresh fromages are minimally aged and eaten within a couple weeks of production. Some popular fresh fromages include cottage fromage, cream fromage, quark, ricotta and fromage frais. Cottage fromage has a cooling, slightly tart flavor and crumbly curds. It's a versatile fromage used in salads, baking or as a snack. Cream fromage has a sweet, mild creaminess and is commonly spread on bagels or used in fromage cake. Fresh fromages tend to have a mild flavor profile but higher moisture content compared to aged varieties.

