

Pride OF Veneto



Made in Veneto, as well as the neighbouring Trentino Alto Adige region in Italy's far north, Asiago is a semi-cooked cheese made of cow's milk. Its typically smooth and mild flavour has seen the product gain popularity worldwide.

ASIAGO CHEESE IS NAMED after the town in which it is produced, located at the foothills of the Vicenza province in Northern Italy's Veneto region. It is produced in wheels, and contains small and irregular holes, with its colour ranging from white to yellow.

In order to be labelled Asiago, the cheese must be made using milk that comes from cattle located in a defined zone – anywhere in the provinces of Vicenza and Trento; and specific areas of the provinces of Padova and Treviso. A certain diet is also required for the cattle, with several food products forbidden if the milk is to be used for the production of Asiago.

Historically, a version of Asiago has been made in the town of Asiago for more than 1000 years, however it was originally produced using sheep's milk. It wasn't until the 16th century, with increased cattle farming in the area, that sheep's milk was replaced with cow's milk. Production of the cheese in Asiago's neighbouring areas began during the 17th century.

Asiago was traditionally made as an aged cheese, but fresh versions of the product began to surface in the early 20th century.

Typically, Asiago has a smooth texture, sweet and mild flavour and is pale in colour. As with most cheeses, its flavour becomes sharper with age. Varieties that are aged for longer periods develop a crumbly texture, stronger flavour and become more yellow in colour.

There are two main types of Asiago. In its fresh, smooth form, the product is called *Asiago Pressato*, while harder, more crumbly versions that have been aged are known as *Asiago d'Allevo*.

Asiago Pressato is made from whole milk and needs to be aged for a minimum of 20 days; while Asiago d'Allevo is produced from skimmed milk and aged for at least 60 days.

Asiago is classified as a 'mountain cheese' and as such is produced in areas located at a height of at least 600 metres above sea level. If the cheese is produced, cured and matured within the designated mountainous areas, and aged for at least 90 days, it is permitted to bear the extra wording *Prodotto della Montagna*, which translates to 'Product of the Mountain'.

The cheese is a DOP product (Protected Designation of Origin), meaning it must be produced according to specific guidelines that govern production areas, processes and materials in order to be allowed to use the Asiago name.

Asiago cheese is so revered in Northern Italy that the Consortium for the Protection of Asiago Cheese was set up in 1979 to protect and promote the product.

The Consortium is tasked with monitoring each step of the production process – from the raw materials used to make Asiago right through to its labeling and sale, ensuring full traceability from start to finish. If any of the production rules are not complied with, then the cheese cannot be sold and marketed as Asiago.

Each wheel of cheese that bears the name Asiago is guaranteed and certified by the Consortium. True Asiago can be recognised by the presence of several stampings on the rind including the Asiago logo and name, and a letter of the alphabet that signifies the date it was produced.

Asiago is a very versatile cheese. Asiago Pressato works well as a table cheese and is perfect in a panini, or with crackers or fruit. Asiago d'Allevo has some similarities to Parmigiano Reggiano, but with a milder flavour, and therefore works well grated over a plate of pasta or in risotto.

ASIAGO IMPORTERS

Basile Imports, Bonfood, Genobile Brothers, Deni International Foods, Formaggi Ocello, Quality Centre Food Services and Visco Fine Foods.

