

The Great Traditional Foods of Europe



Besides being the most assertive of Spain's blue cheeses, Cabrales is also creamy and delicious. Wrapped in a dark blue-green foil with the logo of the Cabrales Regulatory Board, it stands proud with the world's great blues.

Cambozola (Germany)

Though not as well known as some of her neighbors are for cheesemaking, Germany has a fine cheesemaking tradition. They make several very good cheeses, including German versions of Emmental, Gruyère, Münster (or Muenster), as well as their beloved Quark (that Steve Jenkins aptly describes as "a cross between yogurt and small-curd cottage cheese") and Tilsiter. Also, some very distinctive

artisanal cheeses, such as Hirtenkäse ("shepherd's cheese") and Chiantino (a firm cheese rubbed in red wine), are just moving to the forefront. Undoubtedly, however, the best-known and most-successful German cheese is Cambozola, a unique cross between Camembert and Gorgonzola. In other words, it is a creamy soft-ripened cheese with streaks of mild blue molding. A delicious, easy-to-like cheese, it has become very popular on cheeseboards and at parties. It must be noted that Cambozola is a brand-name cheese but earns its place here due to its uniqueness, popularity and importance to German cheesemaking tradition.

Camembert (France)

The French coastal region of Normandy, with its verdant hills dotted with cows, apple trees and quaint villages, has been famous for the quality and abundance of its milk for centuries. It is home to three of the greatest cheeses of France: Livarot, Pont-l'Évêque and the famous soft-ripened, bloomy-rind Camembert. Popular legend has it that a Marie Harel created the cheese, but documented accounts show that the cheese was being sold at markets at least a century before her. However, it is likely that Mme. Harel refined the recipe and brought Camembert to prominence outside of Normandy. Also, her son-in-law is supposed to have presented the cheese to Napoleon III, who liked it well enough to bestow upon it the royal seal of approval, thus further establishing its reputation. With the development of the signature wafer-thin wooden boxes in which the cheese is traditionally packaged, purveyors were able to ship Camembert all over France and subsequently, the world. Prior to the discovery in 1910 of *Penicillium candidum*, the snowy white mold that is sprayed on the cheeses to begin the ripening process, Camembert cheeses were covered with blue mold. Raw-milk versions of Camembert are still available in France, although increasingly less so; the vast majority of Camembert made and consumed — even in France — is pasteurized.

Cheddar (United Kingdom, and specifically, England)

Surely, this is the most imitated cheese in the world. Our own production alone would probably verify that statement. Cheddar is named for a town in Somerset that sits in the heart of Cheddar-making country. The town, famous for the Cheddar Gorge, was a frequented tourist site by people from all over the U.K., who came to think of the local cheese as simply "Cheddar." Today, the name implies the technique used to make the cheese as much as its place of origin. In fact, far more generic Cheddar is made throughout the U.K., the U.S. and around the world than the farmhouse, truckled and bandaged versions that the rest are based upon. The "Cheddaring" process is one of cutting up the curds into small, pebbly pieces that are stacked and restacked continually, resulting in the cheese having a singular texture. English farmhouse versions are reminiscent of the local flora and can be numbered among the greatest cheeses of the world. However, countless artisan versions of Cheddar made today are excellent cheeses, vary greatly from one another and remain the world's most comforting and recognizable cheeses.

Cheshire (United Kingdom)

Along with Cheddar, Cheshire is perhaps the most English of English cheeses, often figuring into classic recipes, such as Welsh Rarebit or as a component of a ploughman's lunch. Very likely the oldest cheese in England, it dates back at least to its inclusion in the Domesday Book in 1086 and more likely to pre-Roman times, although it seems likely that the Romans contributed their expertise to refine the recipe and increase production during their time in England. Cheshire owes much of its distinctive flavor to the rich salt deposits that lay beneath the Cheshire plain that extends from Cheshire through Shropshire and Staffordshire in northwest England. Officially, the milk must come from cattle grazed