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Master Briefing Pack

**PARMIGIANO
REGGIANO**

The *only* Parmesan.



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About Parmigiano Reggiano

Parmigiano Reggiano is one of the oldest cheeses in the world, with an incredibly rich heritage. It is still produced today as it was nearly 1,000 years ago, using the same ingredients, craftsmanship and production techniques, which have undergone very few changes over the centuries.

Parmigiano Reggiano is a Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) product, with distinctive characteristics and very strong links to the area in which it is produced. As a PDO product its production is governed by strict specifications registered within the European Union, protecting both consumers and producers.



To bear the designation 'Parmigiano Reggiano PDO', the cheese must meet the following rules:

- It must be produced in a specific area of northern Italy, by one of around 300 regulated artisanal dairies.
- All stages of production must take place exclusively in the area of origin – this includes grating and packaging to export globally.





- It must be made using the artisanal and natural methods established by the product regulations, which outline production procedures, a special diet for cows, and quality assurance for using the hot iron brand.

The Origins of Parmigiano Reggiano

Parmigiano Reggiano originates from the Middle Ages when monks were the first people to start producing it. Driven by the quest to make a cheese that lasted a long time, they let the cheese mass dry and increased the wheel size, meaning it could be kept for longer and travelled well. This durability has been Parmigiano Reggiano's main selling point, allowing it to travel around the world for centuries.

The first written evidence of Parmigiano Reggiano dates back to 1254 in a notarial deed found in the State Archives of Genoa where the *caseus parmensis* ('the cheese from Parma') is mentioned. The best-known literary evidence dates back to 1344, where Giovanni Boccaccio described the district of Bengodi in the Decameron, mentioning a mountain of "grated Parmesan" on top of which "Macaroni and ravioli" were rolled.





The Ingredients

Only three ingredients are used to make Parmigiano Reggiano: raw and unpasteurised milk, rennet, and salt. The milk used to make Parmigiano Reggiano does not undergo any heat treatments, meaning it retains all the richness of its lactic ferments. Only natural calf rennet is used in the production of Parmigiano Reggiano, which is obtained from the stomach of suckling calves. And the salt used is naturally sourced and of very high quality. No other additives or bacterial starters are added to Parmigiano Reggiano, unlike many other cheeses.



The Cattle and the Areas of Origin

Parmigiano Reggiano can only be made in a small area in northern Italy, including the provinces of Parma, Reggio Emilia, Modena, and Mantua to the right of the river Po, and Bologna to the left of the river Reno - a surface area of approximately 10,000km².

The cattle which produce the milk used in Parmigiano Reggiano follow a specific diet. This means at least 50% of the forage they eat is grown either on dairy farms in the designated area and at least 75% is grown within the production area. The specifications also state that the





cattle's diet must be exclusively made up of vegetable feeds containing cereals such as barley, wheat, and corn which is purchased from specific feed manufacturers.



This strict diet means that the raw milk used to make Parmigiano Reggiano has distinct characteristics from the local microbial flora which are unique to this part of the world, and this is an important part of what makes the cheese's flavours so special and inimitable.

In other parts of Italy, corn silage is used to feed dairy cows, however it is forbidden from being fed to the cattle that produce Parmigiano Reggiano milk. This is because fermented forage creates bacteria in milk that cause harmful fermentations, giving rise to defects, such as swelling in the cheese during its lengthy maturation period. The only way to prevent these harmful microbial activities is by using additives or physical milk centrifugation techniques, Parmigiano Reggiano producers have always opposed non-natural practices.

This is all the more important because Parmigiano Reggiano is made with no additives, with no enzymatic additives or bacteria added to the raw milk. Only the Cheese Master overseeing its production can enhance the lactic bacteria and its impact on the lactic fermentations needed for a successful cheese-making process.





The Different Maturations & Tasting Notes

The minimum maturation period of Parmigiano Reggiano is 12 months, which is the longest minimum maturation of any PDO cheese.

However, it is at 24 months that Parmigiano Reggiano reaches an age that fully expresses its typical characteristics. It can further mature for up to 36, 40 or even 48 months, with each age acquiring unexpected and unparalleled flavours and aromas.

When tasting Parmigiano Reggiano, it is best chunked with the classic almond-shaped knife to enhance its characteristic graininess. Depending on the aroma of the cheese, it can then be used as an ingredient to enhance the flavour of any number of dishes, paired with other high-quality foods and enjoyed on its own.

12 – 19 months – delicate

At this age, Parmigiano Reggiano has a delicate flavour with scents of milk, yoghurt, and butter. The lactic base is characterised by vegetable notes such as grass, boiled vegetables and occasionally fruit and/or flowers. The cheese is granular, crumbly, and slightly soluble, with a simultaneous sweet and sour taste. It is particularly well-suited for aperitifs paired with sparkling white wines, or to enrich salads and cold dishes.

20 – 26 months - harmonious & balanced

At this age, Parmigiano Reggiano expresses a balanced richness of aromas and flavours, with notes of melted butter and Parmigiano Reggiano rind. Fresh fruit – particularly banana, pineapple, and citrus – appear alongside hints of nuts, spices, and beef stock. The cheese is soluble, crumbly, and grainy with numerous tyrosine crystals. It perfectly pairs with medium bodied wines and to add flavour to traditional Italian dishes.

27 – 34 months – aromatic

At this age, Parmigiano Reggiano is well- matured with a pronounced, yet balanced, flavour. The cheese is drier, crumblier, and more soluble, with an almost sandy texture at times. With





notes of spices and nuts, the taste is stronger, making it an ideal ingredient for filled and baked pasta, or to be enjoyed at the end of a meal paired with fruit and honey.



35 – 45 months – intense

At this age, Parmigiano Reggiano is an intense straw yellow colour verging on amber, with clearly visible crystals. The prevailing aromas are chestnuts and meat stock, with warm spicy notes and the smell of hay. The cheese is perfectly balanced and can be enjoyed on its own paired with structured or full-bodied red wines.

45 months and older

At this age, Parmigiano Reggiano is amber straw yellow with an intense, toasted smell. With smoky notes of leather and dried mushrooms, the cheese is dry, very crumbly, and soluble. It is a luxury gift and pleasant companion to be tasted with structured and meditation wines.





How to Store Parmigiano Reggiano

Once purchased, it is best to store Parmigiano Reggiano in the refrigerator to retain its aromatic characteristics and preserve it for longer. It is important to make sure that the packaging is sealed and the cheese is not exposed to the air or exposed to other foods, as this may impact its flavour and texture. So, when storing it is best to keep it in either a glass or plastic container or wrap Parmigiano Reggiano in a food-grade plastic film.

Vacuum-packed Parmigiano Reggiano can be stored in the refrigerator for several months. Then after opening a pack or when buying a freshly cut piece of cheese, make sure to check the instructions and recommendation on how long to keep Parmigiano Reggiano, as these vary depending on its maturation.

Parmigiano Reggiano with a maturation of 12-18 months can be kept for about 15 days, while Parmigiano Reggiano with a maturation of 24 months or more can be kept for about one month. If some mould develops on the surface, it is also possible to remove it using a knife.

Lastly, it is worth noting that it isn't advisable to freeze the Parmigiano Reggiano as this will damage the flavour and texture of the cheese. When you freeze food, crystals form in it and the cheese doesn't react well to this process.

Parmigiano Reggiano's Nutritional Benefits

Parmigiano Reggiano is naturally lactose free, with a lactose content below 0.1g/100g. In the Parmigiano Reggiano production process, lactose (a sugar that is normally present in milk) is fermented by the microflora of lactic acid bacteria present in the raw milk during the first 48 hours following production. This is the so-called lactic fermentation, during which lactic bacteria, normally present in milk, turn lactose sugar into lactic acid during the first two days following production.

Then in terms of Parmigiano Reggiano's nutritional make-up, for an adult following a healthy and balanced diet of 2000 kcal, a 25g serving of Parmigiano Reggiano accounts for 36% of the





calcium requirements and 24% of the phosphorous requirements. Calcium is a mineral that is essential for building and maintaining strong bones and teeth, and phosphorous is also needed to build strong healthy bones, as well as keeping other parts of your body healthy.

Recent scientific studies have also shown that Parmigiano Reggiano aged for 40 months and beyond is a source of selenium and chromium. Selenium is a micronutrient that contributes to the normal functioning of the immune system, protects cells from oxidative stress, aid a normal thyroid function, and strengthens hair and nails. Chromium contributes to normal macronutrient metabolism and the maintenance of healthy blood glucose levels.

Production Regulations & How to Identify Parmigiano Reggiano

The Parmigiano Reggiano Consortium (Consorzio del Parmigiano Reggiano) is a protection body comprised of all producers of the cheese. Established in 1934, it protects and promotes the product, safeguarding its production and promoting it worldwide. Every individual wheel of Parmigiano Reggiano is given a mark of origin (the well-known dots on the rind and a “casein plate”).

Furthermore, an expert from the Consortium individually quality checks every wheel of cheese at the age of 12 months. If it passes the inspection, the cheese is fire-branded with the official Parmigiano Reggiano mark. The certification of compliance with the specifications is given by the Parmigiano Reggiano Quality Control Body on behalf of the European Union and the Ministry.

One of the questions most frequently asked by consumers is about how they can easily identify Parmigiano Reggiano. You can follow these three simple rules to ensure you are purchasing authentic Parmigiano Reggiano:

- Look for the signature dots on the rind that repeat the words Parmigiano Reggiano.
- Make sure that it is ‘Made in Italy’. If it’s not, it is not Parmigiano Reggiano.





- Check that it's a PDO cheese. It guarantees it was made in the place of origin. The PDO logo will be depicted on the packaging.



Parmigiano Reggiano in numbers

As of January 2022, the updated economic figures and production statistics for Parmigiano Reggiano are:

- 2,373 farms supply milk to the dairies.
- 272,000 cattle over 24 months old produce 2.08 million tons of milk every year.
- Parmigiano Reggiano dairies account for 16.9% of Italian milk production.
- 305 dairies produce Parmigiano Reggiano.
- 4,091,144 wheels are produced yearly (approximately 163,000 tons).
- 50,000 people are involved in the production supply chain.
- Parmigiano Reggiano has a turnover of EUR1.71 billion at production and EUR2.7 billion at consumption.
- 62,429 tons of Parmigiano Reggiano are exported yearly.
- 45% export share compared to 44% in 2020.