



# Slow Food Facts

## 'Say Cheese'



### A taste for raw milk

The right to produce cheese from raw milk is a controversial issue for cheesemakers. On one side of the debate are the large-scale industrial producers, who make cheese from pasteurised (heat treated) or homogenised milk and claim that the use of raw milk is a potential health risk. On the other side, artisan cheesemakers question why they should abandon traditional, scientifically recognised control methods that have been practised around the world for many years without health concerns.

### Not all bacteria are bad

Have you ever tasted a raw milk cheese? If you have ever eaten traditional Italian Parmesan, Dutch Gouda or French Camembert, you have! With raw-milk cheeses you can actually taste the breed of the animal, the pasture it grazed on, the season the cheese was made and of course, the expertise of the cheesemaker. Unfortunately, most Australians are still only able to buy the mass-produced versions of some of the world's best cheeses because the sale of raw milk is illegal Australia, and the production of raw milk cheeses is limited and subject to strict regulations. Slow Food believes it is not simply a question of accessing the best tasting milk and cheese, but about food culture and the freedom to choose what we eat. Food safety regulations are important but they must be appropriate to the risk. Besides, not all bacteria are bad and a growing body of evidence attests that bacteria found in raw milk may actually have many health benefits.

### What can you do?

An over-regulated food safety system has a direct negative impact on Australian cheese makers: by limiting their opportunities to practise their skills and develop their knowledge it is difficult for them to compete with cheese makers in other countries where raw milk is readily accessible. Proud producers are unable to tell you their story; describe the landscape and the pastures their cows, goats or sheep grazed upon to produce the milk for each different cheese. Individually we can't solve this regulatory problem. However, we can all challenge the system by signing petitions to ask Australian politicians to legalise raw milk and raw cheese production. More importantly, you can 'vote with your fork': be informed, resist food standardisation, and seek out your regional small-scale (artisan) cheese makers who provide you with food biodiversity and great tasting cheese\*.

\*Note: pregnant women, young children, elderly and immune compromised people are advised not to consume raw milk or raw milk cheese.

For more information visit our website ([www.slowfoodaustralia.com.au](http://www.slowfoodaustralia.com.au)) or Facebook page (@SlowFoodAustralia) or get in touch with your nearest Slow Food community.

Cheese has been around for ever: historians suggest humans were making cheese as far back as 7500 years ago. Nowadays, **there are about 2000 different varieties of cheese.**



Apparently there are 'rules' to presenting a cheese platter. According to Dairy Australia **a good cheese platter has one soft cheese, one hard cheese, and one strong cheese, accompanied by something crunchy (like walnuts), something sweet (like dried fruit), and something tangy.** Like fruit, freshly made cheeses have seasons and aren't available all year around. Like fruit, they also ripen over time.



Remember those old Tom and Jerry cartoons? Well, they lied to you because **studies have shown that mice actually don't like cheese** and prefer sweet and sugary foods over the savoury snack.