

CHEESE – AMERICAN ORIGINALS

California Milk Provides a Home-Grown Personality



Cheese is the foundation for classic restaurant favorites like grilled cheese, mac & cheese, nachos and cheeseburgers. Cheddar, Colby and Monterey Jack are mainstays in the back-of-the-house at all types of restaurants – their versatility and availability make them ideal for main courses, appetizers and snacking. For example, Cheddar is offered as mild, sharp, or extra-sharp, and also white or yellow, giving chefs great flexibility in recipes. Monterey Jack has many flavored versions with Pepper Jack emerging as a key ingredient to give a spicy kick in many dishes.

AMERICAN ORIGINALS FACTS

California cheesemakers produce more than 350 million pounds of **Cheddar** annually. It's not a type of cheese, but rather a process. The curds are formed into sheets and stacked to promote draining of the whey. They're then cut into little pieces and pressed into molds for uniformity of texture and shape. And don't judge a Cheddar by its color – the orange coloring of many versions comes from annatto seeds; many Cheddars are as creamy-white as the milk from which they came.

Colby is similar to mellow cheddar but is not “cheddared.” The whey is replaced by water during cooking, reducing the acidity of the curd and resulting in a moister, milder cheese. Longhorn is Colby with a traditional half-moon shape.

Originating with Franciscan friars in the 18th century, **Monterey Jack** got its name from David Jacks, a land baron who began acquiring farms in Monterey, Calif. He began selling the cheese, queso blanco pais, which became known as Jack's Cheese, and then Monterey Jack's cheese. Today, the cheese is semi-hard, mild and slightly nutty with excellent meltability.

Dry Jack was a happy accident that occurred in 1915, when a San Francisco cheese seller forgot about some wheels of fresh Jack in storage. When discovered, they were hard, dry and salty, making them perfect for grating. It's referred to as “America's Parmesan.”

Teleme was also invented in Northern California in the early 1900's. The rich flavor, texture and character of the cheese add a tangy burst to dishes from pizza to polenta.



STORAGE & HANDLING

Most cheeses will maintain their flavor and quality in a refrigerator for extended periods, but use the following guidelines for storing cheese after opening:

- Fresh cheeses should be treated just like milk and kept refrigerated. Many fresh cheeses can last for a few weeks if properly stored, so note the freshness date on the package before you buy. If you detect mold on a fresh cheese, discard it.
- Semi-hard and hard cheeses will last four to eight weeks if properly stored. After opening consider removing the original plastic wrap and re-wrapping in parchment or wax paper, which allows the cheese to breathe.



FOODSERVICE APPLICATIONS

Back-of-the-House

From traditional appetizers to sweet desserts, chefs are finding numerous ways to incorporate American originals in their recipes. Add tuna melts, cheese fries, fondue, quesadillas and croquettes to the menu. American cheeses are also great as toppings for salads and baked potatoes, and shredded on Mexican foods. Dry Jack adds a jolt of flavor to salads. Or stuff a melting cheese into the crust of pizzas.

Front-of-the-House

Nothing says California like a selection of hand-crafted cheeses. Elegant California cheeses are being showcased in cheese courses all across the foodservice spectrum – at restaurants, of course, but also with caterers, delis and in retail. The cheese offerings are offered as appetizers, mid-meal and dessert. California's artisan cheeses bring flavor and luxury to any customer experience.



WHAT'S TRENDING

Hot, Hot, Hot

Chefs know that the natural creaminess of cheese is the perfect balance to add heat. In many food categories spicy is hot and the demand for peppers in American-style cheeses keeps growing. Whether Jalapeño, Ghost Peppers or Habanero, foodservice operators are adding spicy jacks and Cheddars as sandwich toppings, stir-ins for soups or melted on potatoes.

Cooking with Teleme

Chefs are discovering the quintessential California cheese, Teleme, adding the creamy, luscious cheese to hamburgers, risotto and pizza. It's also delightful with pears or apples as a dessert with a drizzle of honey. Or as a light breakfast on toast or a croissant.

Elevated Cheese Curds

These bouncy chunks of curdled milk are signature ingredients in poutine, a mound of fries topped with gravy and cheese curds. The once-humble and homey poutine is now being dressed up by chefs who incorporate such high-end ingredients braised short ribs, beef brisket and pulled pork.

Flavored Cheese

Consumers at retail have made smoked cheese, as well as herb- and vegetable-flavored cheeses, category killers. Chefs are discovering new ways to mellow out American Classic cheeses by adding these subtler flavors to dishes.

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