

Title:

English Cheeses - The Glory Of Vintage Stilton

Word Count:

479

Summary:

Cheese was originally developed as a way of preserving milk. Now cheese is classed as a gourmet food, well, some cheese anyway.

Cheeses from different regions have their own characteristic texture and taste because the conditions that the bacterial fermentation is carried out under differ. Cheese makers can use fresh or pasteurised milk, skimmed or whole milk and add colouring. Different pH levels for the fermentation and different temperatures will all affect the taste a...

Keywords:

cheese, english food, english cheese, stilton, lancashire, red leicester

Article Body:

Cheese was originally developed as a way of preserving milk. Now cheese is classed as a gourmet food, well, some cheese anyway.

Cheeses from different regions have their own characteristic texture and taste because the conditions that the bacterial fermentation is carried out under differ. Cheese makers can use fresh or pasteurised milk, skimmed or whole milk and add colouring. Different pH levels for the fermentation and different temperatures will all affect the taste and texture of the finished product.

Cheese is a very personal thing. Many people will not have foreign cheese. French people have never heard of the majority of English cheeses. I enjoy French cheese, but I will try anything.

Camembert and Brie are made from pasteurised and from unpasteurised milk. Look for cheeses made from unpasteurised milk. They bear no resemblance to the tasteless and bland pasteurised varieties. Unpasteurised cheese is not suitable for very young children or the elderly.

English cheese is what I was brought up on. My lunch used to be 1/4 of Lancashire cheese (and a steak and kidney pie). Lancashire cheese is mild, very pale and very crumbly. It is best cut from a whole cheese. Shrink wrapped

lancashire cheese is fine for cooking, but that's all. You can only keep lancashire cheese for three or four days. The taste deteriorates on exposure to air. Lancashire is the best cheese for making toasted sandwiches, it has a very high melting point.

Red Leicester cheese is another favourite. This has a nutty taste and should have cracks in it. This is another cheese that is infinitely better when freshly cut, rather than shrink wrapped. Red Leicester has better keeping properties than Lancashire and also works well on toasted sandwiches.

Stilton cheese is made in Leicestershire and has blue veins running through it. You can buy mature, extra mature and vintage Stilton. Be aware though that once you have developed a taste for the vintage cheese that you can never go back to the ordinary supermarket variety.

The extra cost for the vintage cheese is not high, yet the taste comparison is unbelievable. You can recognise a good stilton by the rind. It should be about about one centimetre thick, crusty and a deep creamy yellow. The cheese itself should be deep yellow with plenty of blue veins through it. Most people do not eat the rind on Stilton, but it is edible.

If you eat vintage stilton without drinking a ten or twenty years old port with it you are missing a taste combination that can only be described as ecstatic. You can judge the quality of the port by how far up your sinuses the taste goes. The best port and Stilton combination I have ever tasted was a 1991 Noval LB with a vintage Stilton. WOW! That made my eyes pop out, the taste sensation went so far up my sinuses.