CHEESE CHARACTERISTICS AND CLASSIFICATION
SOURCES

www.Cheese.com

“Mastering Artisan Cheesemaking” by Gianaclis Caldwell

“Cheese – Identification, Classification, Utilization” by John Fischer, Culinary Institute of America
SO MANY TYPES
WE CLASSIFY ANIMALS

CLASSIFICATION OF ANIMALS

This is the grouping together of animals with similar characteristics. Animals can be classed as either vertebrates or invertebrates.

VERTEBRATES

These are animals that have a backbone.

- **Reptiles**
  - Have dry scaly skin.
  - Lay eggs on dry land.
  - Are cold blooded.
  - (Snake, Crocodile)

- **Fish**
  - Have scales on their bodies.
  - Have gills for breathing.
  - Are cold blooded.
  - (Shark, Tuna)

- **Amphibians**
  - Have moist slimy skin.
  - Lay eggs in water.
  - Are cold blooded.
  - (Frog, Newt)

- **Birds**
  - Have feathers and wings.
  - Have beaks and lay eggs.
  - Are warm blooded.
  - (Wren, Swan)

- **Mammals**
  - Have fur or hair.
  - Feed young on milk.
  - Are warm blooded.
  - (Cows, Humans)

INVERTEBRATES

These are animals that do not have a backbone.

- **Protozoa**
  - Single cell organisms.
  - All microscopic.

- **Flatworms**
  - Simple and soft bodied.
  - (Tape worm, Flukes)

- **Annelid Worms**
  - Segmented bodies.
  - (Earthworm, Leech)

- **Echinoderms**
  - Spiny sea creatures.
  - (Starfish, Sea urchins)

- **Coelenterates**
  - Soft bodied, sting cells.
  - (Jellyfish, Sea anemones)

- **Anthropods**
  - Hard external skeleton.
  - Jointed limbs.

- **Molluscs**
  - Soft bodied, most have shells.
  - (Snails, Limpets)

- **Arachnids**
  - Eight legs, two body parts, no antennae.
  - (Spider, Scorpion)

- **Crustaceans**
  - Mostly sea creatures.
  - Many legs and two pairs of antennae.
  - (Crab, Lobster)

- **Insects**
  - Wings, six legs, three body parts, one pair of antennae.
  - (Beetle, Ladybird)

- **Myriapods**
  - Many legs and body segments.
  - (Centipede, Millipede)
WE CLASSIFY PINECONES
BUT CHEESE SEEMS A BIT DIFFERENT
WHY CLASSIFY?

- A means to explore
- To compare and contrast
- To learn and organize
- A way to discuss
- To compete and judge
- To serve
MY FIRST ATTEMPT

- 36 cheese recipes
- Style
- Milk type
- Additives
- Curd processing
- Rind preparation
WAYS TO CLASSIFY

• Lots of characteristics of cheese with which you can sort and classify:
  – Milk Type
  – Type
  – Texture
  – Flavor
  – Aroma
  – Rind
  – Aging
  – Region
  – Color
  – Microbes
  – Other
WE’RE NOT GOING TO LOOK AT THEM ALL

• Let’s take a look at the more common and useful characteristics with we can use to classify cheeses
MILK TYPE

• Common (to us):
  – Cow
  – Goat
  – Sheep

• Worldwide:
  – Buffalo
  – Camel
  – Donkey
  – Mare
  – Reindeer
  – Water buffalo
  – Yak

Chevre: goat
Mozzarella: cow - Water buffalo
Brie: cow
Monterey Jack: cow
Gouda: cow - goat - sheep
Roquefort: sheep
Cheddar: cow
Parmesan: cow
Pecorino Romano: cow - sheep
Feta: goat - sheep
**TYPE**

- A common way to organize cheese.
- Relates to the moisture content of the final cheese and indirectly to its aging.

- Fresh Soft
- Fresh Firm
- Soft
- Semi-soft
- Firm
- Semi-Firm
- Semi-hard
- Hard

Chevre  Fresh
Mozzarella  Fresh
Brie  Soft
Monterey Jack  Semi-hard
Gouda  Firm to Semi-hard
Roquefort  Semi-soft
Cheddar  Hard
Parmesan  Hard
Pecorino Romano  Hard
Feta  Soft
### Texture

- Brittle buttery chalky
- Chewy creamy crumbly
- Crystalline dense dry
- Elastic firm flaky fluffy
- Grainy oily open runny
- Semi-firm smooth soft
- Soft-ripened spreadable
- Springy sticky
- Stringy supple

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cheese</th>
<th>Texture Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chevre</td>
<td>Soft - firm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozzarella</td>
<td>Soft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brie</td>
<td>Soft, Buttery, runny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monterey Jack</td>
<td>Firm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gouda</td>
<td>Compact, Dense, springy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roquefort</td>
<td>Creamy, crumbly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheddar</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parmesan</td>
<td>Dense, crystalline, grainy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pecorino Romano</td>
<td>Dense, crumbly, grainy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feta</td>
<td>Crumbly, grainy, open</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FLAVOR

- No real standard. Examples are:
  - Earthy
  - Tangy
  - Milky
  - Mild
  - Nutty
  - Sweet
  - Salty
  - Barnyard
  - Sharp
  - Smokey
  - Tart
  - Fruity

Chevre           earthy, tangy, tart
Mozzarella       milky
Brie             mild, nutty, tangy, fruity
Monterey Jack    buttery, mild
Gouda            Creamy, nutty, sweet
Roquefort        Salty, sharp, tangy
Cheddar          Creamy, sharp, nutty
Parmesan         fruity, nutty, savory, sharp
Pecorino Romano  salty, sharp, smokey, spicy
Feta             Salty, tangy
AROMA

• Again, no real standard:
  - Earthy
  - Fresh
  - Strong
  - Aromatic
  - Pungent
  - Feet
  - Mild
  - Intense
  - Mellow
  - Nutty
  - Strong
  - Farmy
  - Stinky

Chevre         earthy
Mozzarella     fresh, milky
Brie           strong
Monterey Jack  aromatic
Gouda          Pungent
Roquefort      mild, intense
Cheddar        mild, mellow
Parmesan       strong
Pecorino Romano nutty, strong
Feta           nutty, strong
OTHER WAYS TO CLASSIFY

• Fresh and Acid-coagulated
  – Chevre, Ricotta
• Brined
  – Feta
• White Mold, surface-ripened
  – Brie
• Washed rind, surface-ripened
  – Reblochon, Twig Farm
• Blue cheeses
• Pasta Filata
• Semi-hard to hard
• Grating cheeses
## A Comparative Look

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Milk Type</th>
<th>Texture</th>
<th>Flavor</th>
<th>Aroma</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chevre</strong></td>
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<td>Soft</td>
<td>milky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cheddar</strong></td>
<td>Hard</td>
<td>Compact, crumbly</td>
<td>Creamy, sharp, nutty</td>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>Pecorino Romano</strong></td>
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<td>Semi-hard</td>
<td>Firm</td>
<td>buttery, mild</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Creamy, nutty, sweet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Roquefort</strong></td>
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<td>Creamy, crumbly</td>
<td>Salty, sharp, tangy</td>
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<td>Soft, Buttery, runny</td>
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SO?

• There's really no ONE right answer as to how to classify cheese.
• It mostly depends upon your intent.
CHEESE TASTING AND PLANNING

• Use this when tasting cheeses
• As a guide to planning a pairing
• Cheese plate
• Pick a main characteristic
  – Vary another characteristic
  – Cow cheeses with a variety of TYPE
  – Firm cheese with Cow, Goat, Sheep

| Cheese Name: __________________________ |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MILK TYPE:</th>
<th>Cow</th>
<th>Goat</th>
<th>Sheep</th>
<th>Other:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TEXTURE:</td>
<td>brittle</td>
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<td>chalky</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>crumbly</td>
<td>crystalline</td>
<td>dense</td>
<td>dry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>firm</td>
<td>flaky</td>
<td>fluffy</td>
<td>grainy</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>open</td>
<td>runny</td>
<td>Semi-firm</td>
<td>smooth</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sticky</td>
<td>spreadable</td>
<td>springy</td>
<td>soft-ripened</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>stringy</td>
<td>supple</td>
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<tr>
<td>FLAVOR:</td>
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<td>Tangy</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Farmy</td>
<td>Stinky</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STYLE:</td>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>Bloomy-Rind</td>
<td>Pasta Filata</td>
<td>Washed Rind</td>
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</table>

Other tasting notes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pairing:</th>
<th>Wine type</th>
<th>Beer style</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nuts</td>
<td>Fruit</td>
</tr>
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</table>
THE END.

• Questions?