



## A Cheesy Affair!

Fairly new to Nepali palates, cheese is an important part of Italian cuisine. Taste a different bit of Italy in each variety of Italian cheese.

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#### **Ricotta**

This soft and creamy curd cheese comes from central and southern Italy. It is made from whey which is the by-product that comes while making most kinds of cheeses. The Italian name ricotta means “cook again”. The yellowish by-product is cooked to make this cheese which has rich but delicate flavor and a mildly grainy texture. An essential in Italian kitchens, ricotta can be used for pancakes, pastas, salads, cheesecakes and almost everything from appetizers to desserts. Since most fat in the milk goes into cheese, ricotta contains no fat but is rich in protein.

#### **Cacciotta**

Caccio in Italian simply means cheese. It is a typical table cheese made mostly in central Italy around Rome and Tuscany. Cacciotta comes in different flavors including rosemary, fenugreek (methi), cumin (jeera), olive and truffle. Fenugreek and cumin

cacciotta is more common in Northern Europe, while olives and rosemary ones are mostly consumed in Italy. Cacciotta is not used for cooking. It is commonly eaten with bread and wine. It can also be used in sandwiches and cheese plates.

#### **Fresh Mozzarella**

Famously used on pizzas, this semi-soft Italian cheese is originally from south of Rome, regions near Naples. Mozzarella is made with a process known as pasta filata in which the cheese after being soaked in water is repeatedly stretched and kneaded to produce a consistency. Traditionally, fresh mozzarella is served within 24 hours after it is made, but low moisture mozzarella can be kept refrigerated for up to a month. It can be used in all kinds of Italian dishes including pasta and lasagna.

#### **Scamorza**

Fresh mozzarella when left to dry for about 7-8 days becomes scamorza. The taste is more or less like mozzarella but the texture is harder and drier. A classic way to have this cheese is to grill a chunk of scamorza until the top part starts to melt and the bottom part turns brown. Then, it can be eaten with bread.

#### **Parmesan**

This hard cheese is named after the Italian province of Parma where this cheese is

produced. Parmesan is much harder than normal cheese and has a grainy texture; hence it is also called ‘grana’. It is stored for long periods of time ranging from a few months to several years. The hardness comes from age, and as the saying goes, the older the better. Parmesan is commonly grated over salads, pasta dishes, soups and risottos.

#### **Blue Cheese**

Originally produced in a place called gorgonzola in Northern Italy near Milan, blue cheese is a distinct variety among Italian cheeses. The preparation of blue cheese requires a special environment and controlled temperature for the blue mould to grow inside. The taste ranges from sweet and creamy to salty and spicy depending on how it is made. An essential ingredient of pizza ai quattro formaggi (four cheeses pizza), it can be used for almost everything, even dessert. !

#### **How to enjoy your cheese**

The best way to relish cheese is to have it with bread and wine. Slices of soft cheese with a glass of dry red wine and some Italian white bread is a classic combination. You may also experiment with other varieties of wines and bread. For fun, dip cheese in honey or spread some jam on it. Have it with your favorite fruits. You can't go wrong with grapes or juicy slices of pears.

#### **Sandro Serafini,**

the cheesemaker at Himal Farm makes all of the varieties of cheeses mentioned here. You can buy them at the farmer's market at 1905 every Saturday or from Himal Farm located in Khumaltar, Lalitpur.



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