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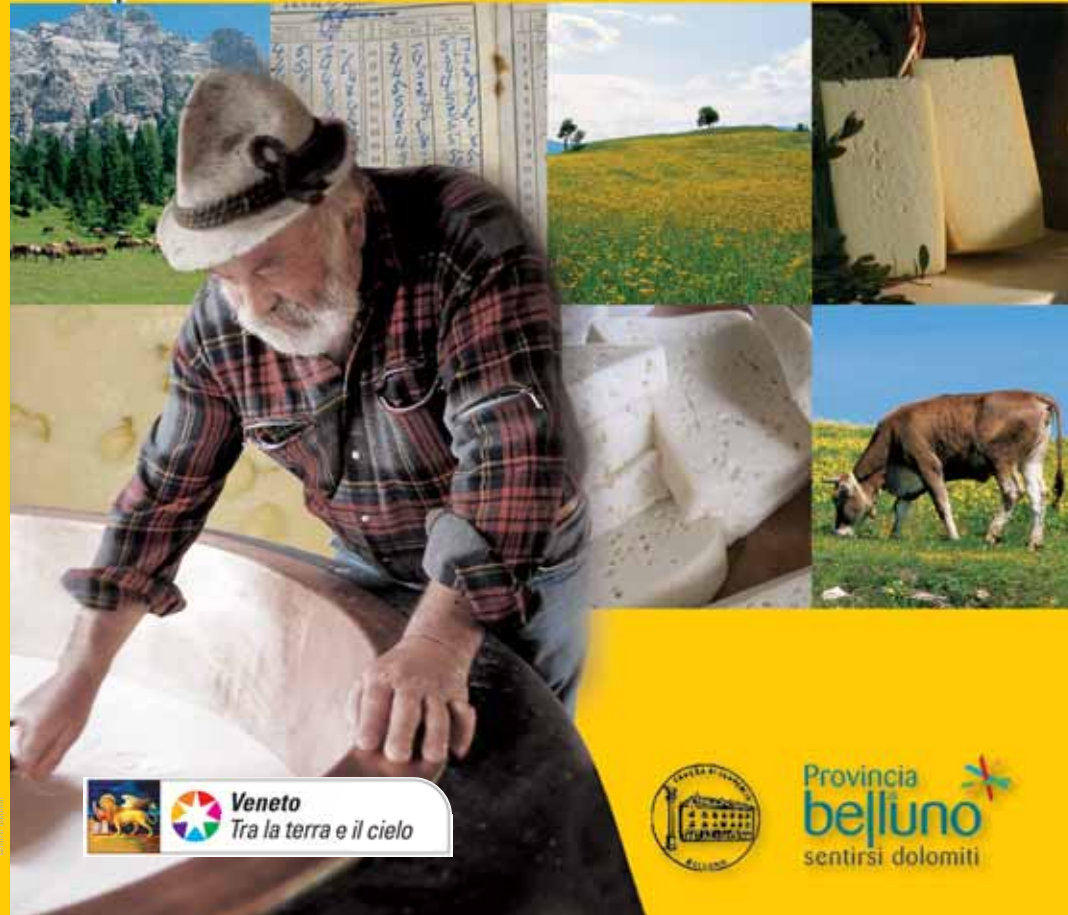
# THE CHEESES OF THE BELLUNO DOLOMITES

## HOW THEY ARE CREATED AND HOW THEY SHOULD BE ENJOYED

Project co-financed by the European Union, through the European Regional Development fund, Community Initiative INTERREG III A Italy-Austria. Project "The Belluno Cheese Route – Sights and Tastes to Delight the Visitor." Code VEN 222065.



THE CHEESES OF THE BELLUNO DOLOMITES HOW THEY ARE CREATED AND HOW THEY SHOULD BE ENJOYED



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# THE CHEESES OF THE BELLUNO DOLOMITES

HOW THEY ARE CREATED AND  
HOW THEY SHOULD BE ENJOYED



This booklet has been published as part of the regionally-managed project “THE BELLUNO CHEESE ROUTE: SIGHTS AND TASTES TO DELIGHT THE VISITOR”, carried out by the Province of Belluno and the Chamber of Commerce of Belluno (with the collaboration of the Veneto Region Milk Producers’ Association) and financed under the EU project Interreg IIIA Italy-Austria. As is the case for all cross-border projects, the activities have been agreed upon and developed in partnership with the Austrian associations “Tourismusverband Lienzer Dolomiten” (Lienz-Osttirol region), “Tourismusverband Hohepustertal” (Sillian) and “Verein zur Förderung des Stadtmarktes Lienz”, and with the Bolzano partner “Centro Culturale Grand Hotel Dobbiaco”. The project is an excellent opportunity to promote typical mountain produce, in particular cheeses, in order to create a close link with the promotion of the local area, culture and tourism.

There is a clear connection between, on the one hand, the tourist, hotel and catering trades and on the other, the safeguarding and promotion of typical quality produce which, in particular in mountain areas, is one of the main channels of communication with the visitor, insofar as it is representative of the identity of the people who live and work in the mountains.

All of the above can equally be applied to the nearby mountain areas of the Province of Bolzano and the East Tyrol in Austria, and it is for these reasons that the Veneto Region has undertaken this project, aimed at maintaining and developing activities related to the production of cheese. The objective is to render local cheeses more widely known and better appreciated in the areas bordering the Region, thereby promoting food and wine specialities together with tourist attractions, two fields in which the whole of the Veneto has a great deal to offer.

In the same way and for the same reasons, our “Interreg neighbours” will also promote their own products, with the aim of creating a cross-border production area attractive to tourists.

It is in this context that we believe **the Belluno Dolomites Cheese Route** will be able to transmit the cultural heritage and specific identity of the mountain area, both local and cross-border, thus bringing consumers and tourists into contact with local history and with the alpine communities which over the centuries have created those cheeses with a combination of effort, imagination and skill.

**Avv. Fabio Gava**

*Regional Councillor for Economic  
and Institutional Policy*

**Dr. Luca Zaia**

*Vice-President of the  
Veneto Regional Council*



In today's market, product, production area and customer involvement are all equally important in giving added value to traditional, typical products. These three elements are skilfully brought together in the "Cheese Route", a project conceived with the aim of promoting local dairy produce in the Belluno area.

Throughout the world, animal husbandry has become increasingly industrialized over the years. Large firms, thousands of head of cattle shut up in huge sheds and serial production are the norm, both in Italy and abroad. These breeders have achieved economic growth and competitiveness on agricultural process markets, but at a price, and that price is the standardization of products.

Courage is therefore required to move in the opposite direction and give backing to a low environmental impact project such as the cheese route, characterized by extensive farming techniques and aimed at promoting and bringing to the fore the different aspects of an area which offers the consumer such variety and above all respect.

Thanks to this project we have done our best to link traditional products with the catering industry. All the particular, unique features of the local cheeses produced in Belluno are exploited to the full in the traditional recipes of the local countryfolk, and sampling these is one of the finest ways for visitors to discover – or re-discover – the true identity of our area. As they try our delicious cheeses, visitors can smell the scent of our fields, taste a little piece of the Dolomites, and stock up on memories and emotions.

The booklet *The cheeses of the Belluno Dolomites: How they are created and how they should be enjoyed* offers details of a wide selection of the cheeses made in the Belluno Dolomites, and describes their characteristics and particular qualities. The booklet is designed to help the reader choose high-quality products, closely linked to the dairy traditions of the province. There are four sections, each of which defines a different category of cheese products: the traditional cheeses, identified in the Ministerial Decree 350/99; typical dairy cheeses; the organic cheeses of Consiglio and Slow Food presidia. For each product there is a chart listing the area where it is produced, the techniques used to make it, the scents and the aromas. The booklet aims to give a complete, comprehensive overview of cheese-making in the Belluno Dolomites and the products on offer for the consumer.

**Sergio Reolon**

*President of the  
Province of Belluno*

**Paolo Terribile**

*President of the Chamber  
of Commerce of Belluno*





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The ideal starting point for the Belluno Cheese Route is the Agordino area, in Canale d'Agordo to be precise, where, in 1872, the parish priest, Father Antonio Della Lucia created the first dairy producers' cooperative together with his fellow villagers. This model of association suited the needs of the small local communities, who did not have the means or the resources to transform the subsistence economy on their own; it organized these small communities into a modern cooperative movement which spread rapidly, initially in the Agordino area and thereafter throughout the whole of the alpine area. Father Antonio was clearly interested not only in the emancipation and spiritual growth of his parishioners, but also in their social and economic dignity.

## A priest on the Cheese Route

With this same spirit, he began to fight for the social and legal emancipation of women as early as 1870, speaking and writing in their favour. Today, one of the most important schools in the Veneto of forestry and agrarian studies, situated in Vellai di Feltre, bears his name. If Father Antonio and his parishioners in the Agordino set the wheels of the dairy cooperative machine in motion, the present-day situation of the movement can be exemplified by another dairy cooperative, the Casél di Celarda in the Feltre area. Set up in 1895 by twelve founder members, the dairy was operative, as were numerous others in the province, until the 1970s, when it closed its doors. In recent years, delicate restoration work has brought it back to life, and it is now open to visitors, offering the chance to breathe in that air of genuine solidarity which characterized the dairy throughout its eighty-year existence. The Casél di Celarda is located alongside the stream of the same name and is the only dairy in the province which used the force of the water to drive the elementary machinery necessary for turning the milk into cheese. Structures of this type are scattered throughout the province, with 17 in the Feltrino area alone, which are gradually being brought back into operation. The Cheese Route will also take visitors to these little museums of country life and memories.



Off we go then. The Land of Cheese awaits us. The route presented here, in the form of factfiles, will take us on a winding route in and out of the towns and villages of the province of Belluno, where we will get to know all the local cheeses, from the most famous to the best-kept secrets. Mountains, alpine huts, milk cows, stables, haysheds and men and women at work in numerous fields and little dairies and very little flat land : this is the landscape which for so many years has played host to the rite of cheese-making. We will speak of the cheeses typical of this Dolomite area, of their history and how they are made every day. Some of them have become famous, and have graduated from the curdling pot (cagliera) of the little

## The smooth flavours of the Dolomites

local cheese maker to the modern dairy factory situated in Busche, in the almost flat part of the Feltrino area; others can be found only by following tortuous, winding roads up through snow-covered passes and stony gorges and alongside emerald green pastures dotted with seasonal haysheds and picture-postcard mountain barns.

This is where Belluno's true riches lie. Good pastureland, fine soil, hard Dolomite rock and genuine people. In the cheeses we will encounter along our route you can get a taste of centuries of history during which the mountain folk and the dairymen gave their all in terms of craftsmanship, innovation, techniques and manual skills; in some cases chance and the idiosyncracies of the weather also played an important part. The transformation of milk into cheese is not merely a question of unchanging rules and techniques. Time, just like rainwater on stone, models, transforms, furrows. The last word will never be spoken on the quality and the characteristics of these sophisticated products created thanks to the skill of cheese makers. Time changes and transforms everything.





The names given to the cheeses, the small villages where the *latterie turnarie* (rotational system whereby local milk producers handed the milk over to one local family at a time who made it into butter and cheese) still exist and the seasonal mountain dairy huts, which open when the last snows melt away and work on calmly and industriously until the first cold days of September, remind us of the origins of these places and their people, the rituals which guaranteed their survival and their dignity. Having to stay high up in the mountains during the months when cattle were taken up from the valley to the mountain pastures obliged our forebears to come up with and test out ingenious ideas for making and preserving cheeses which, in most cases, had to see the poor families through the following winter and spring. Italy boasts one of the widest varieties of cheeses in the world, and Belluno can lay claim to a priceless little pantry full of humble cheeses, the result of mountain wisdom and care and attention.



As we follow the narrow mountain roads we will discover the flavours and the secrets of this delightful story. Customs change from one valley to another, and so do the names given to the typical trousers, skirts, caps, shawls, hats and headgear, aprons and footwear, the idioms, the words which give a name and an existence to the tools, techniques and operations which make up the ritual of cheese making.



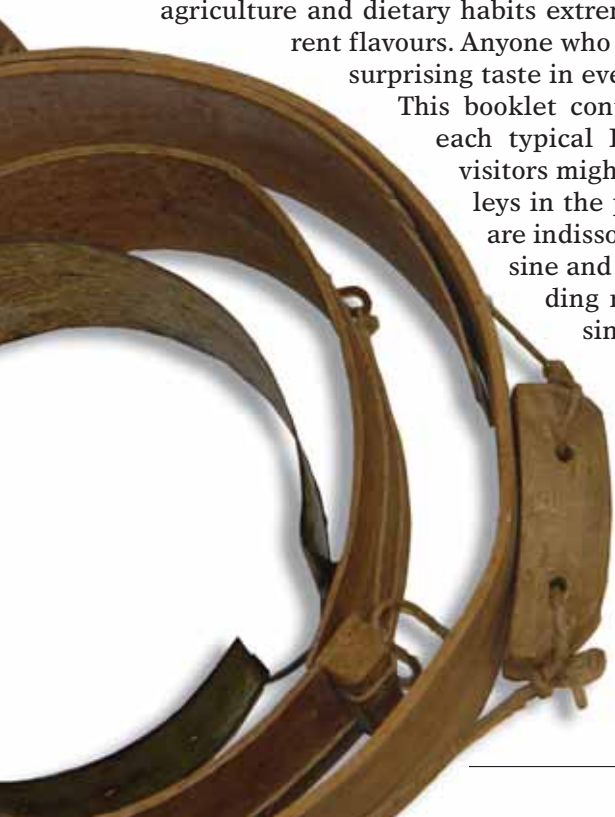
# North-East Passages



The province of Belluno is the mountain heart of the Veneto region, with the striking outline of the Dolomites providing an ideal backdrop to the great art cities of the plain: spectacular, eternal, ever-changing landscapes and a variety of microclimates which form natural borders between one area and another.

The mountain environment is hostile like no other. Its snow-covered passes used to cut its inhabitants off from the rest of the world for entire seasons, until the snow melted; at the same time, it was the only route down into the fertile Padana plain for the peoples of the north-east. It was precisely these harsh conditions which helped to render the local traditions, agriculture and dietary habits extremely varied and rich in different flavours. Anyone who so desires can discover a new, surprising taste in every single valley.

This booklet contains an information file for each typical Belluno cheese product that visitors might find as they explore the valleys in the province. These dairy cheeses are indissolubly linked with Belluno cuisine and traditions: cheese plays a leading role in Belluno's food history, since the inventiveness of the local people has led to the creation of numerous varieties scattered throughout the valleys, the flavours of which have a long story to tell – the story of the *latte-rie turnarie*, of the families who lived exclusively on home-produced food, of the dairy huts looking out onto the pasturelands.



The cheese we describe in this brief guide is a product which has stood the test of time, and which has remained constant while frantic changes and economic development went on all around it. Over the centuries, a humble, yet top-quality food and farming culture has grown up alongside these cheeses in the valleys of Belluno. Bean-growing has survived to this day, indeed is enjoying a new lease of life (the Lamon bean is a prime example); together with their cousin the Broad Bean, beans were the base of the staple diet of the Dolomite valley folk over the years. The valley dwellers were initially more reluctant to agree to growing another staple food, the Potato, and several priests – at one time the undisputed figures of authority in these close-knit, insular communities – had to struggle against ignorance and diffidence to encourage their parishioners to grow the humble – yet invaluable – potato, which would later help to guarantee the survival of entire families during the famines of the 19th century.

Small-scale, family based farming, nurturing of the soil and animal compost guarantee to this day a genuine, natural product which cannot be found in the intensive farming carried out on the plain. Another product of the valleys which has contributed to creating Belluno's unique local culinary history and tradition is the Poppy. Dried poppy seeds are used locally to prepare both traditional herbal remedies and a number of local dishes (*cassonziei* – a kind of filled pasta -, bread, *gnocchi*, home-made sweets...). Barley, Rye, Forest Fruits, both wild and cultivated, and Pumpkin (there is a Pumpkin Fair in Vas every year), complete the picture of Belluno's agricultural economy, in which production is closely linked to the passage of time and the rhythms of manual work, thus guaranteeing quality and originality. Finally, mention must be made of goat and sheep's milk cheeses, which are gradually carving out a space for themselves on the local market. Many young firms are doing their best to ensure that these fine dairy products can form part of Belluno's rich spectrum of food products in the course of the next few years.



# A typical story

In most regions of Italy, three elements have always formed the base of traditional food and cooking: wheat, oil and wine. Necessary proteins were provided by the widespread use of pulses and meat – which was eaten more rarely, on particular occasions – and above all milk and cheese.

In the province of Belluno, where no oil at all and very little wine was produced, milk and cheese, together with meat, were essential to mountain life.

The consumption of milk products such as curds and caciotta cheeses



goes back a remarkably long way, and it is unbelievable how such a food was able to take hold and indeed spread far and wide, using as it does the same small number of ingredients: milk, salt and rennet. Over the centuries, these few simple ingredients have been used to create a variety of types of cheese, depending on the kinds of settlement, means of preservation, saleability, the tastes of the time, weather conditions and transport. These cheeses are the fruit of varied, rich and widespread local cultures.

The shape, weight, amount of fat, maturing, consistency and flavour of the cheeses is the “happy ending” to a fascinating, personal story of failures, successes, trial and error, coincidences; that popular empiricism which has given rise to what we now call “typical” food products, “typical” local cuisine. For every “typical” product which disappears from

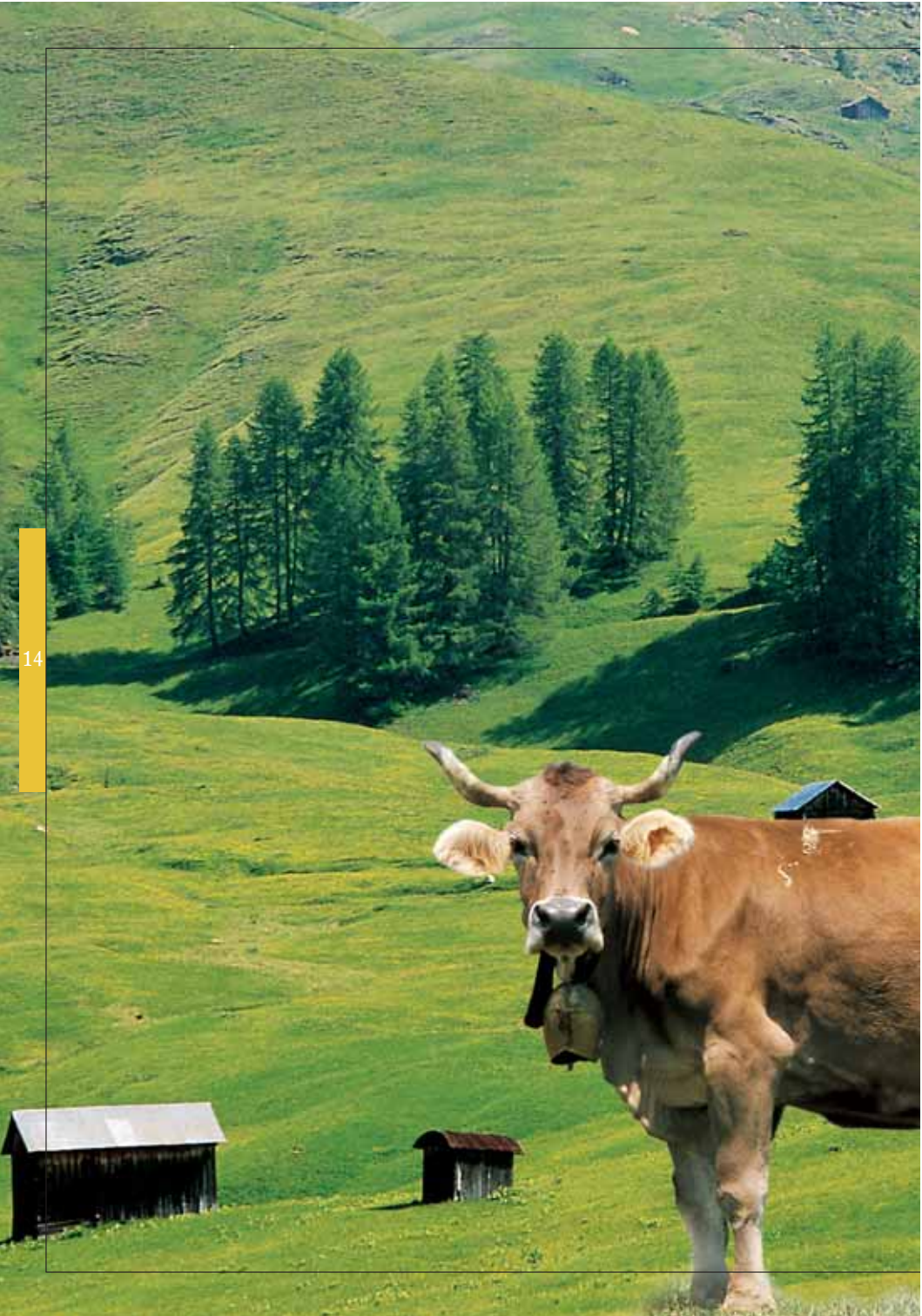




our table – be it due to negligence or a warped sense of “progress” – we lose a little piece of our history, together with the hard work and complex situations which went into creating it. And for every “typical” cheese we manage to save, promote and protect, we are preserving a little slice of our own personal imprint on history. Seeking out cheeses along the roads of Belluno is a step back in time in search of tastes which have been perfected over the years; the route might take you away from the easy tarmac road with its modern dairy factories (which combine tradition with the accuracy of technical repeatability) and on up – so don’t forget the hiking boots! – to the high altitude fields and pastures where cows graze placidly and impassively in the shadow of the Dolomites, under the watchful gaze of herdsman.







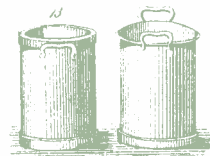


# Cheese



**C**heese is the product which is obtained from full-cream or semi-skimmed milk, following the process of coagulation – natural or otherwise – with or without the use of milk enzymes and cooking salt. The milk, raw or pasteurized, may be from cows, goats, sheep or buffalo, or a mixture of two or more. How the milk is treated initially (refrigeration, pasteurization and skimming), whether it is cooked or not, how and for how long it is matured, all come together to define the various types of cheese.

## How it is made

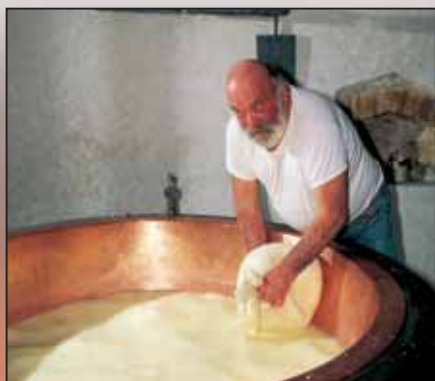
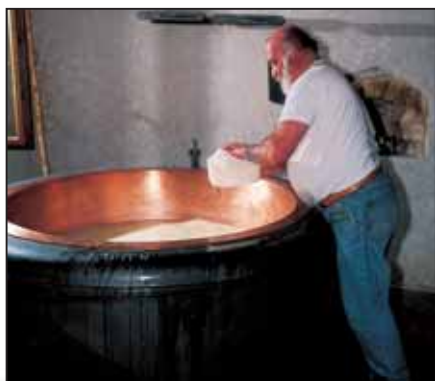


**M**ilk is made into cheese as a result of three main stages: the coagulation of the milk, which creates the curd; the purging of the whey; and the maturing of the curd. After the milk has been collected, it is turned into cheese by separating the liquid part (i.e. the whey) from the solid part (i.e. the proteins), which will become cheese. Water, lactose and sugars remain dissolved in the whey.

Coagulation may be achieved by acidification, thanks to the action of ferments which are naturally present in the milk, or, more frequently, by using a milk-coagulating enzyme, rennet, made from the stomach of calves, lambs or young goats. Once the curd has formed, it is broken up with a particular instrument, called a curd knife, into pieces the size of an orange or a walnut for soft cheeses, the size of a bean for semi-hard cheeses, and the size of a grain of rice for hard cheeses. The curd, left to rest for a brief period, contracts into a solid mass









which is then extracted from the boiler in which it has been placed and divided up into the moulds (*fascere*), where it can be pressed in order to obtain a firmer texture. The moulds then undergo a dry or brine salting process, in order not only to enhance the flavour, but also to allow the cheese to be preserved for longer. Finally, the cheese is matured, or aged, a process which can last anything from a few hours to many months, depending on the type of cheese.

# MONTASIO DOP





## MONTASIO

COOKED, SEMI-HARD CHEESE

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*Production area:*

Provinces of Belluno, Treviso, Padua  
Venice, Pordenone and Udine

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*Milk:*

Raw thermised cows' milk  
Full-fat or semi-skimmed from two  
or four milkings

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*Maturing:*

From 2 months to 10 or more months

*The history of Montasio production dates back to the mid-13th century, when it was supposedly first created by a monk from the abbey of Moggio, in the province of Udine, under the jurisdiction of which lay all the mountain dairy huts on the Montasio massif in the Julian Alps, hence the name.*

*It was granted DOP (Protected Denomination of Origin) status on 12th June 1996.*

Montasio DOP is cylindrical in shape, with a height which varies from 6 to 15 cm and a diameter of 30-40 cm; an entire uncut piece (or "form" ) weighs between 5 and 9 Kg. The rind is smooth and elastic, becoming dry and darker over time. The smooth consistency of the paste becomes more close-textured and flaky as the cheese matures and is pitted with partridge-eye holes. The white colour becomes first straw-coloured, then darkens to yellow. It has a sweet, smooth, delicate flavour which becomes more pronounced with aging. It is considered a table cheese after it has aged for 2-5 months and a grating cheese after more than a year.





# CASEL BELLUNESE



## CASEL BELLUNESE

SEMI-COOKED, SEMI-HARD CHEESE

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*Production area:*

Between the Agordino,  
Comelico, Valbelluna and Feltrino areas

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*Milk:*

Full-fat or semi-skimmed cows' milk

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*Maturing:*

From 2 months to more than 8 months

*The name derives from the word Casél, which means “dairy”. The whole province is scattered with small, isolated Caséi which, until a few years ago were home to the co-operative latterie turnarie (rotational dairies) which were set up around the end of the 19th century. Some of these, such as Celarda and Vignui have been restored and can today be visited.*

Casél is cylindrical in shape, with slightly convex sides and a height of 8-10 cm, diameter of 30-45 cm and weight from 4 to 7 Kg. It is close-textured when young and flaky when mature, unevenly pitted with holes; it varies in colour from white to pale straw yellow. The rind is smooth, even, thin, pale hazelnut in colour, with the name printed on it. It has a sweet flavour when it is medium-mature, become stronger and tending towards piquant as it ages further. It is a semi fat cheese, considered a table cheese. It should be wrapped in a cotton cloth and kept in the least cold part of the fridge.



# MALGA BELLUNESE



## MALGA BELLUNESE

SEMI-COOKED, SEMI-HARD CHEESE

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*Production area:*

Mountain dairy huts in the Pre-Alps  
and the Belluno Dolomites

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*Milk:*

Full-fat or semi-skimmed cows' milk

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*Maturing:*

From 2 months to more than 8 months

*The Malga (mountain dairy huts) and the Malghesi (dairy herdsmen) are archetypical figures of the economy of Belluno. Cattle are regularly driven up to the high mountain pastures where the finest herbs and flowers grow. These mountain dairy huts are scattered throughout the whole province. It is worth mentioning two of them, in a particularly noteworthy position: Malga delle Vette Grandi, in the Feltrino area, where, at the beginning of the summer, you can see one of the biggest and most spectacular displays of flowers in bloom in the whole of the alpine area; and Malga Ombretta, in the shadow of the overhanging south face of the Marmolada. All of the huts are accessible, and all of them sell their produce.*

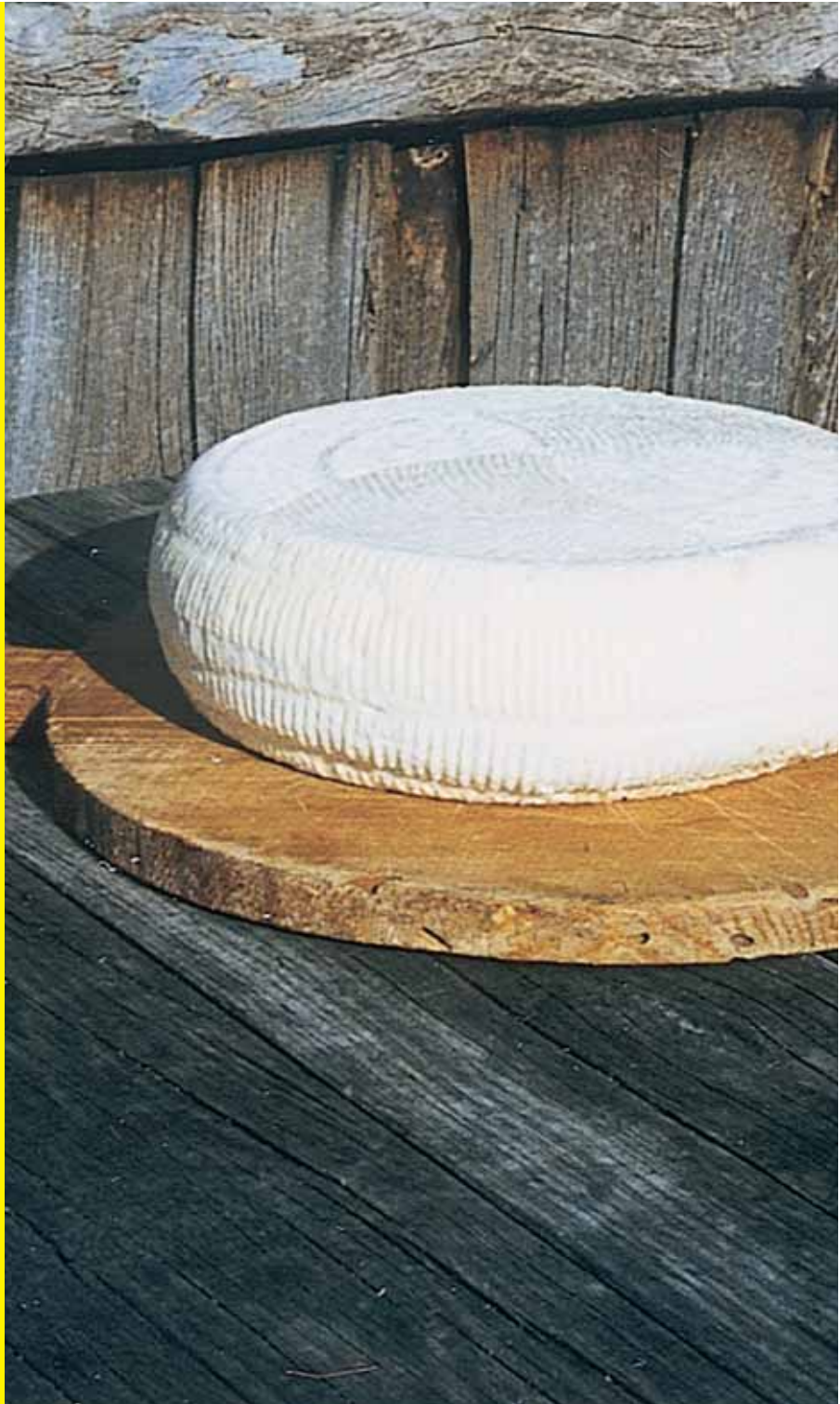
Malga Bellunese cheese is cylindrical in shape, with slightly convex sides of a height of 5-10cm, diameter of 25-40 cm and weight of 4-7 Kg. The paste is close-textured, flaky when mature, slightly pitted with small, irregular holes. It varies in colour from straw-yellow to deep yellow. It has a full, marked flavour, becoming more intense and aromatic as it ages.

The variability of its organoleptic characteristics is due to the particular diet of the cows in the high-altitude pastures, where there is an extremely wide variety of vegetables and flowers.





# MORLACCO DEL GRAPPA



## MORLACCO DEL GRAPPA

SOFT, RAW CHEESE

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*Production area:*

Monte Grappa Massif

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*Milk:*

Semi-skimmed raw cows' milk

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*Maturing:*

Maximum 5 months



*Murlak, Murlaco, Burlacco or Morlacco were the names used throughout the ages to indicate a cows' milk cheese produced in the area of the Grappa plateau. Herdsmen and woodsmen, who settled on the Grappa during the period of the Republic of Venice, used to make a soft, low-fat, raw milk cheese which took its name from their native region in the Balkans: Morlakkia. The milk used to make the cheese came from the Burlina cows, the only autochthonous breed in the Veneto, which today is in serious danger of extinction. These black and white cows are small, hardy and suited to the sparse pasturelands of the Grappa area.*

Morlacco is cylindrical in shape, with convex sides of a height of 5-10cm, diameter of 30-50 cm and weight of 4-10 Kg. The paste is soft and pure white in colour, pitted with small, but clearly visible holes. The variability of its organoleptic characteristics, very intense and aromatic, is due to the richness and variety of the pastures in the Grappa area. The cheese is made up in the summer mountain pastures with milk from the evening milking (with the cream skimmed off when it floats to the top) added to the full-fat milk from the morning milking.

PIAVER





## PIAVE

COOKED, HARD CHEESE

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*Production area:*

Province of Belluno

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*Milk:*

Full-fat or semi-skimmed cows' milk

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*Maturing:*

Up to 15 months

*The name derives from the river Piave, which starts out in the north of the province of Belluno and flows right down into the south and then on towards the Adriatic, passing through the provinces of Treviso and Venice. Production began in the 1960s.*

PIAVE cheese is produced according to the age-old rules of the cheese-makers' craft, which have now been set down in a series of "Production Regulations". A specific bacterial culture grown in thermized milk and a specific bacterial culture grown in whey are added to the milk; these cultures are produced in the cheese factory from milk and whey which contain enzymes belonging to autochthonous varieties, which are essential in creating the specific organoleptic properties of the product.

Four varieties of Piave are available on the market:

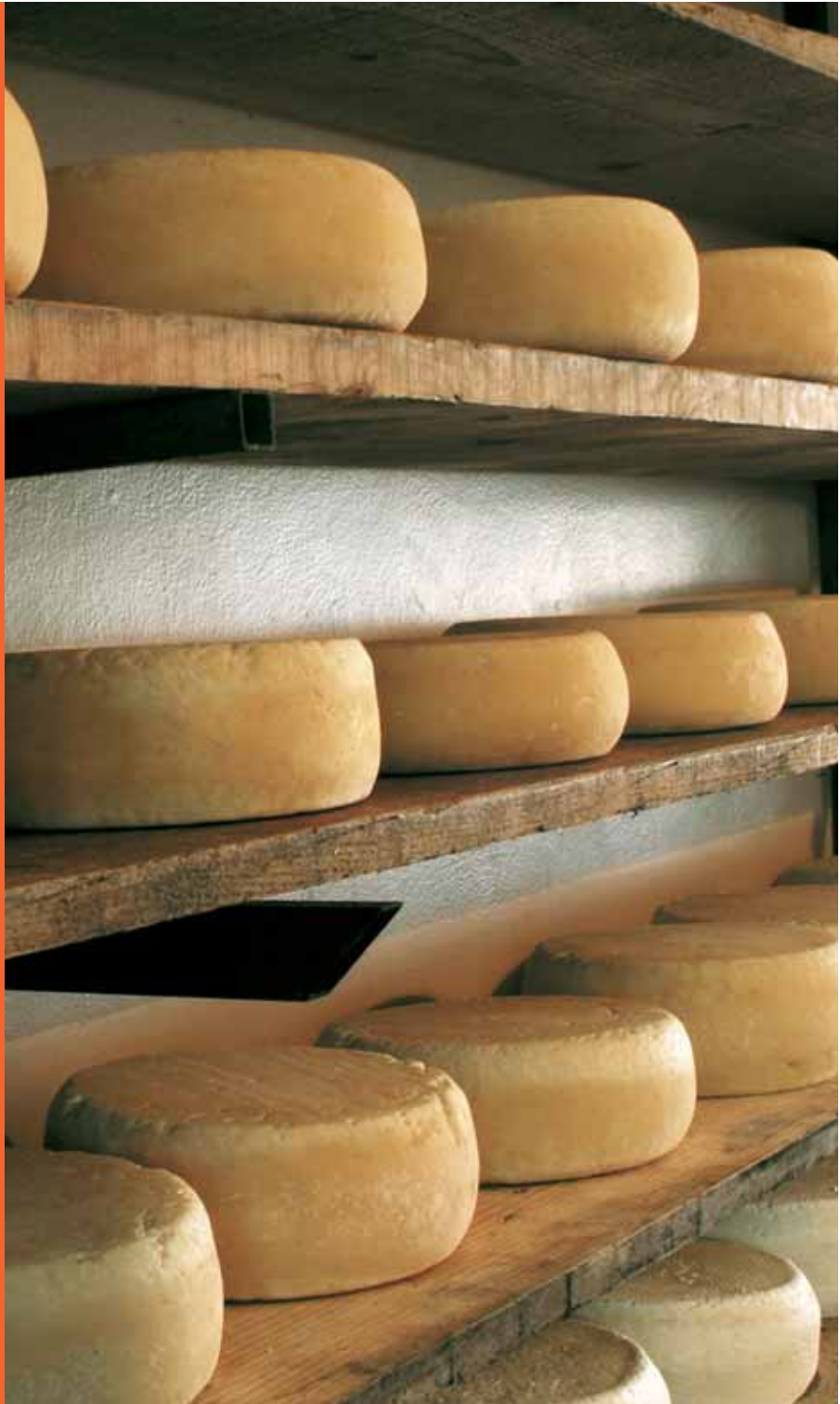
- fresh (*fresco*) (matured for 20-60 days)
- medium (*mezzano*) (matured for 60-180 days)
- mature (*vecchio*) (matured for more than 180 days)
- extra-mature (*oro del tempo*) (matured for more than 12 months)

It is a cooked, hard, mature cheese, cylindrical in shape, with a diameter of 30-34 cm, height of 6-10 cm and weight of 5-8 kg.

The rind, which is soft and pale in colour in the fresh variety, becomes thicker and more consistent as the cheese ages, becoming hard and brownish in colour when it reaches the Mature stage. The paste is white in the fresh variety, taking on a straw-yellow colour in the later stages of the maturing process. The intense, full-bodied flavour becomes more pronounced as the cheese ages, retaining a particular note which renders it quite unique. There are no holes present, and the paste takes on a characteristic, slightly crumbly quality when it reaches the "mature" stage.



# BASTARDO DEL GRAPPA



## BASTARDO DEL GRAPPA

SEMI-COOKED CHEESE

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*Production area:*

Monte Grappa massif

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*Milk:*

Semi-skimmed cows' milk

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*Maturing:*

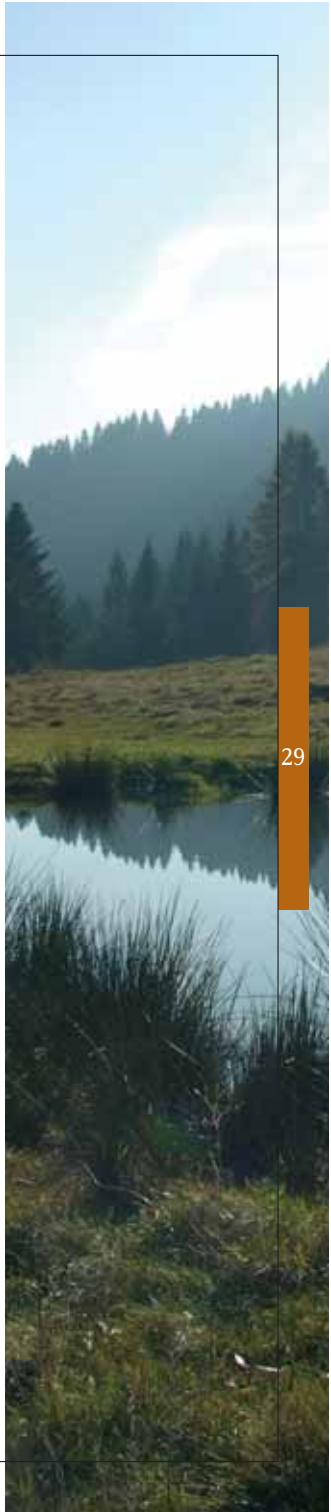
2 months to more than 12 months

*Its history runs parallel to the history of Morlacco cheese.*

*The name derives from the fact that Bastardo is produced when the milk, for chronological or environmental reasons, cannot be made into Morlacco. It is produced in the numerous mountain dairy huts which can be found at work in the summer in the Grappa area, situated amid pastures, little valleys and extraordinarily beautiful walking paths. The variety of herbs and flowers in the area bring out the flavour of Bastardo as the cheese ages.*

Bastardo is cylindrical in shape, with slightly convex sides of a height of 5-10 cm, diameter of 25-40 cm and weight of 4-7 Kg. It is close-textured when fresh and flaky when mature, dark yellow in colour and unevenly pitted with holes. The rind is uneven, varying in colour, but usually tending towards deep yellow. It has a marked, full flavour, which intensifies as the cheese matures, and a characteristic aromatic scent, with a strong note of wild herbs.

It is a semi-fat table cheese and should be eaten between 60 and 90 days. The taste improves notably as it matures.



BUSCHE



## BUSCHE

SEMI-COOKED, SOFT,  
SEMI-MATURE CHEESE

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*Production area:*  
Province of Belluno

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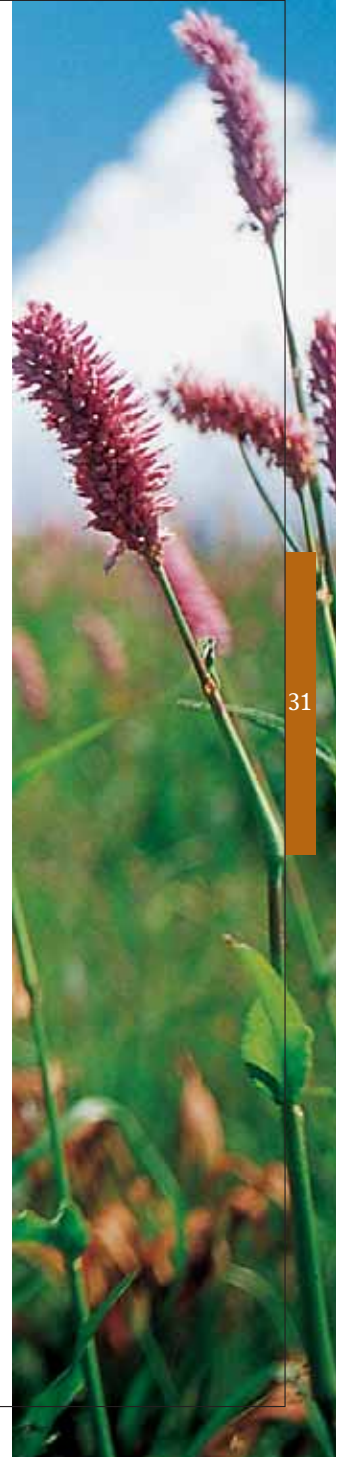
*Milk:*  
Full-fat cows' milk

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*Maturing:*  
15 to 20 days

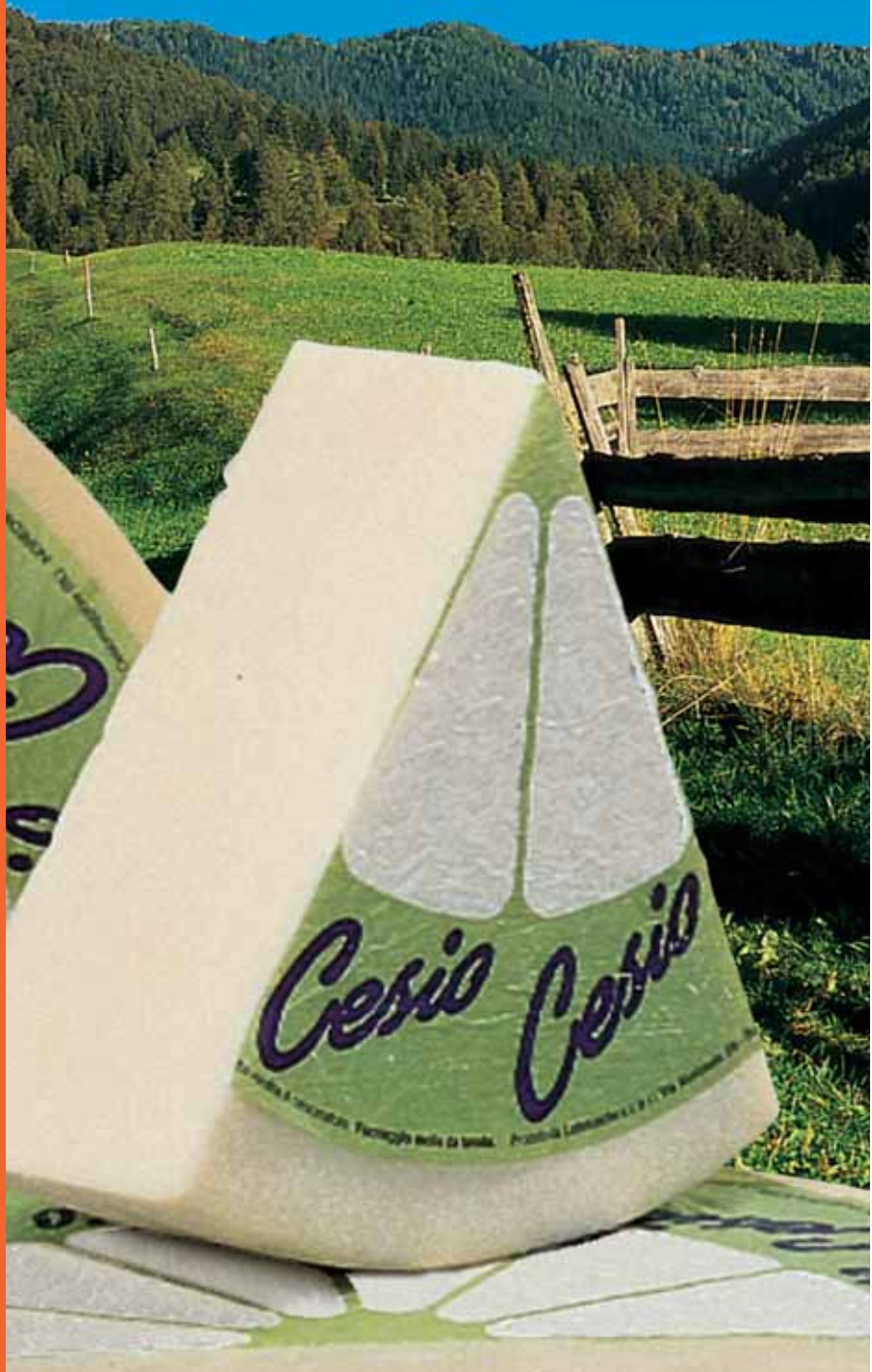
*This cheese was first produced in the 1970s under the name of Mastella (the local dialect word for “milk bucket”). From the 1980s it has been known as Busche; the name derives from the place where it is made, in the municipality of Cesiomaggiore, at the foot of the Vette Feltrine (Feltre Peaks), alongside the Piave river, in an area of extraordinary environmental variety.*

Busche cheese is cylindrical in shape, with a height of 7-9 cm, diameter of 30-34 cm and weight of 7-9 Kg. The paste is white in colour, smooth and creamy, with a sweet taste. It is pitted with a few, unevenly scattered holes. The rind is soft and pale in colour. The paste is semi-cooked, semi-hard and semi-mature, and it is classified as a *latteria* (dairy) type of cheese; it is reminiscent of the cheeses produced by the first *latterie turnarie* (rotational dairy systems) set up in the Feltrino area by the cooperative societies in the numerous *Caséi* (dairies) scattered throughout the local area.





CESIO



## CESIO

SEMI-COOKED, SEMI-HARD,  
SEMI-MATURE CHEESE

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*Production area:*  
Province of Belluno

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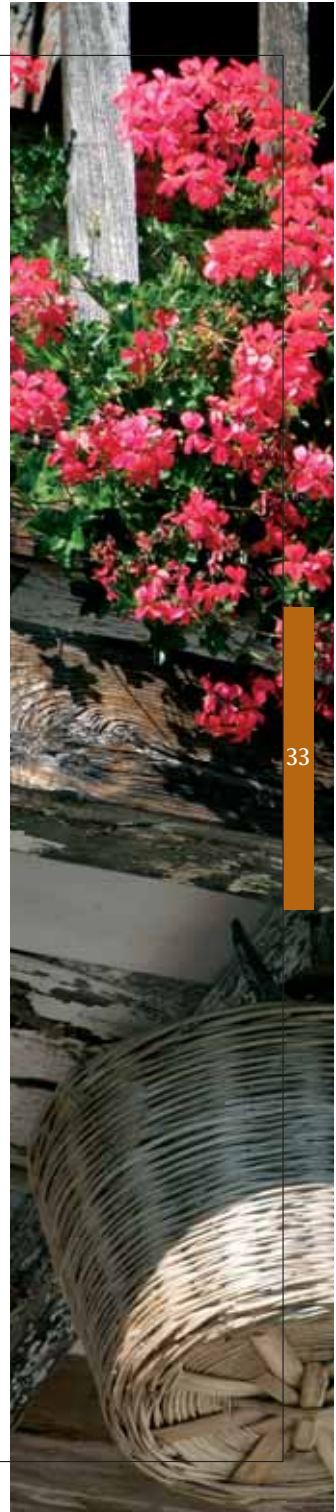
*Milk:*  
Full-fat cows' milk

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*Maturing:*  
20 - 45 days

*The name comes from the municipality of Cesio-maggiore, in the south of the province of Belluno, which lies between the Sas de Mura crags and the bed of the Piave river. Here we can find the cheese factory which first produced the cheese at the beginning of the 1970s; it is still open today, and carries on the tradition of the old cooperative society, using high-tech equipment. Today the cheese is produced with milk collected throughout the province of Belluno.*

It is cylindrical in shape, with a height of 8 cm and a diameter of 32 cm. It is white in colour, without holes or cracks, and a characteristic, pleasant, intense flavour. It becomes fully mature after 40/45 days. The milk used comes mainly from Bruna and Bruno Alpina cows bred on the summer mountain pastures and thus fed on fodder containing a large quantity of flowers. It is an excellent table cheese and can also be used as an ingredient for fillings or for melting cheese recipes.



# CONTRIN





## CONTRIN

SEMI-COOKED, SEMI-SOFT CHEESE

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*Production area:*

Municipality of Livinallongo

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*Milk:*

Full-fat cows' milk

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*Maturing:*

Up to 3 months

*The name comes from the village of Contrin in the municipality of Livinallongo, the Ladin heart of the Belluno Dolomites, where the cheese was first produced, and where the high mountain pastures reach right up to the edges of the majestic Dolomite mountain groups.*

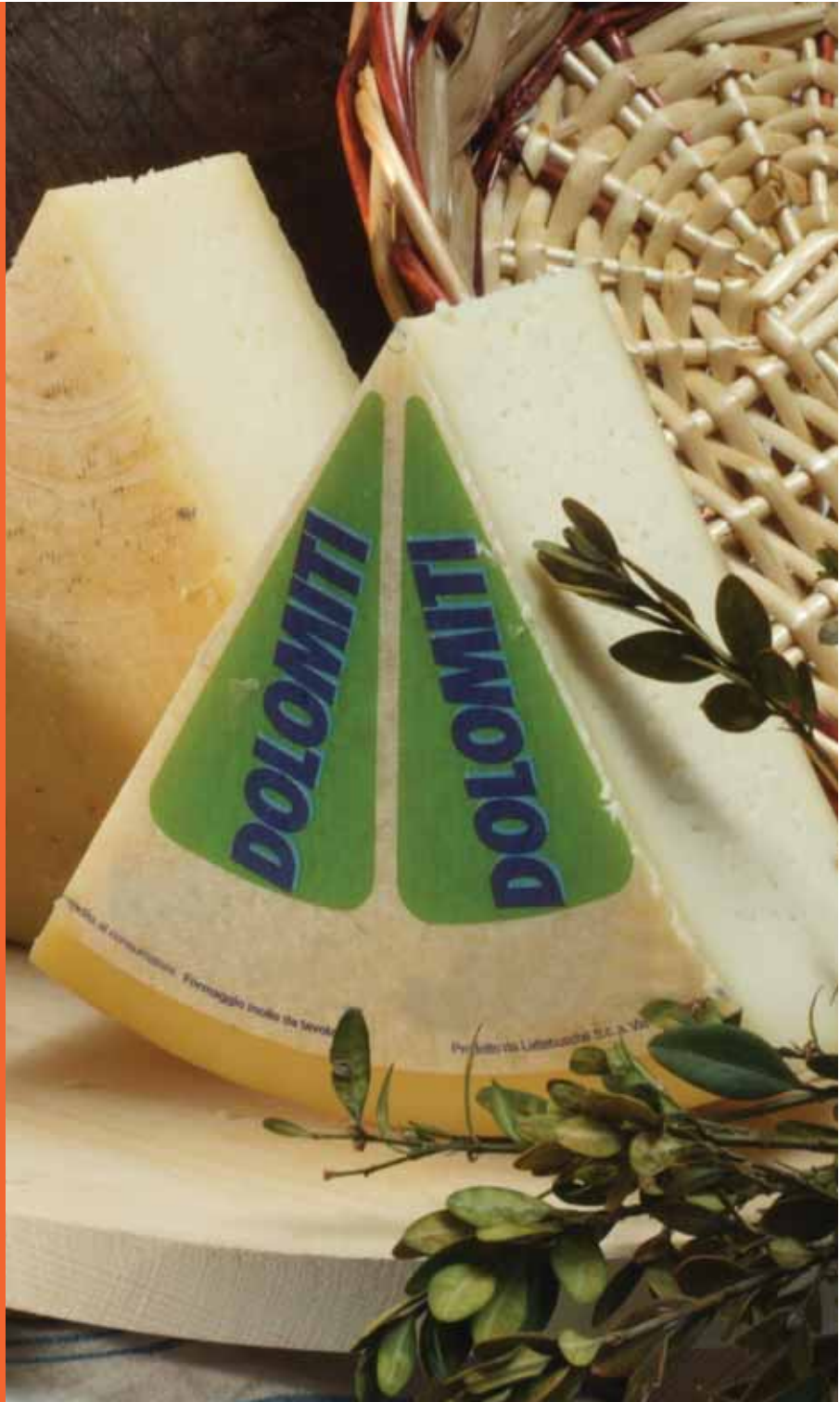
The Ladins are a minority people, who speak – and write – a particular language which dates back to ancient times and varies from one valley to another.

Contrin is cylindrical in shape, with a height of 20 cm, diameter of 20 cm and weight of 4 Kg. The paste is semi-smooth, of soft type, white in colour if produced in winter and straw-yellow in summer. It is a full-fat, table cheese, with a rough, uneven rind, white in colour with slight streaks of grey. It has a creamy, buttery, fragrant, hearty flavour, with a fruity after-taste. It has a marked milky aroma, ever so slightly acidic, with a floral note. Like Fodom and Renaz cheese, it is produced by a small, efficient cooperative of local cheese-makers which has been in operation since 1932.





# DOLOMITI



## DOLOMITI

SEMI-COOKED, SOFT,  
SEMI-MATURE CHEESE

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*Production area:*  
Province of Belluno

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*Milk:*  
Raw cows' milk

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*Maturing:*  
25 - 60 days

*The name derives from the mountain range of the same name, a large part of which lies in the province of Belluno. The area is rich in pastureland, and livestock are still driven up to the summer mountain pastures to feed upon a variety of fragrant local grass, herbs and flowers. The cheese was first produced in the 1960s with the name of Nostrano (our own), because it was made locally and was common throughout the Dolomites. It took on its current name in the 1980s.*

Today Dolomiti cheese is cylindrical in shape, with a height of 7-9 cm, diameter of 30-34 cm and weight of 6-7 Kg. The paste is white, smooth but not creamy, with a pleasant, intense flavour. It is pitted with a few small holes, and the rind is soft and pale in colour. It is classified as a semi-cooked, soft, semi-mature *latteria* (dairy) cheese and is reminiscent of the cheese produced in the first cooperative dairies in the valley communities.



FODOM





## FODOM

SEMI-COOKED, SEMI-SOFT CHEESE

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### *Production:*

Municipality of Livinallongo

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### *Milk:*

Raw, semi-skimmed cows' milk  
mainly from Bruna breed of cows

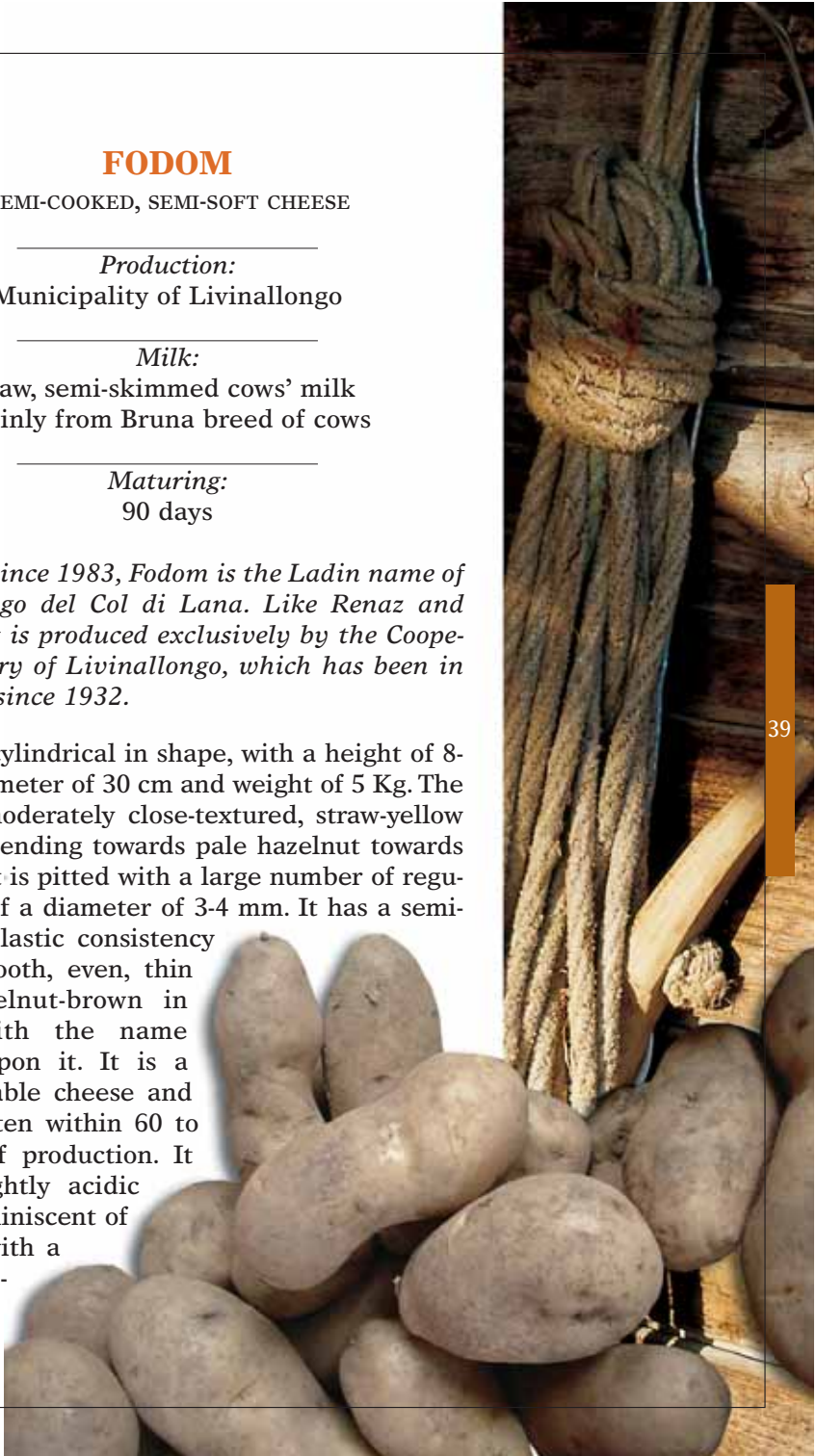
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### *Maturing:*

90 days

*Produced since 1983, Fodom is the Ladin name of Livinallongo del Col di Lana. Like Renaz and Contrin, it is produced exclusively by the Co-operative Dairy of Livinallongo, which has been in operation since 1932.*

Fodom is cylindrical in shape, with a height of 8-10 cm, diameter of 30 cm and weight of 5 Kg. The paste is moderately close-textured, straw-yellow in colour tending towards pale hazelnut towards the rind. It is pitted with a large number of regular holes of a diameter of 3-4 mm. It has a semi-soft and elastic consistency and a smooth, even, thin rind, hazelnut-brown in colour with the name marked upon it. It is a semi-fat table cheese and is best eaten within 60 to 90 days of production. It has a slightly acidic aroma reminiscent of yoghurt, with a slight bitter, herby note.



# LATTERIA DI SAPPADA



## LATTERIA DI SAPPADA

SEMI-COOKED, SEMI-HARD,  
SEMI-MATURE CHEESE

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*Production area:*

Municipality of Sappada

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*Milk:*

Semi-skimmed

---

*Maturing:*

Up to a year or more

*Sappada, which lends its name to this cheese of ancient origin, is situated in an open, sun-kissed valley alongside the beginning of the Piave river, surrounded by lush, green pastures covered in flowers. It was originally called simply Latteria (dairy) because it used to be produced in the old latterie turnarie (rotational dairies); “di Sappada” was later added to reflect the particular nature of the pastures and the exclusive techniques used to produce it.*

Latteria di Sappada is cylindrical in shape, with a height 6-8 cm, diameter of 30-32 cm and weight of 5-7 Kg. It has a clean, smooth rind. The paste is semi-hard, straw-yellow in colour, pitted with small, uniform holes. It is classified as a soft, semi-fat cheese, and has a pleasant, fragrant, sweet, clean flavour and a marked aroma, with a hint of hay and flowers, which becomes more intense as the cheese ages.



NEVEGAL





## NEVEGAL

SEMI-COOKED, SOFT,  
SEMI-MATURE CHEESE

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*Production area:*  
Province of Belluno

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*Milk:*  
Full-fat cows' milk

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*Maturing:*  
20 - 30 days

*Nevegal cheese takes its name from the Nevegal mountains which overlook the city of Belluno, so-called because it snows a great deal there (neve is the Italian for snow) in winter. Nevegal is a ski area close to the city, also popular with summer day-trippers and holidaymakers, traditionally frequented by people from Belluno and Venice. It is rich in pastureland, with walking, horse-riding and mountain bike paths which cross the Pre-Alps in all directions between the provinces of Treviso and Belluno.*

Nevegal is cylindrical in shape, with a height of 7-9 cm, diameter of 30-34 cm and weight of 6-7 Kg per uncut piece. The rind is soft and pale in colour. The paste is white, smooth and creamy, with a sweet flavour. It is unevenly pitted with a small number of holes.



RENAZ



## RENAZ

SEMI-COOKED, SEMI-HARD CHEESE

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### *Production area:*

Municipality of Livinallongo  
mainly from  
Bruna breed of cows

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### *Milk:*

Full-fat raw cows' milk

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### *Maturing:*

Up to a year

*The Ladin name derives from Renaz, in the municipality of Livinallongo, where it has been produced since time immemorial. Its rich, aromatic scent is due to the complex variety of hay. It is produced exclusively in the winter months by the Cooperative Dairy of Livinallongo del Col di Lana.*

Renaz is cylindrical in shape, with a height of 7-9 cm, diameter of 30 cm and weight of 5.5 Kg per uncut piece. The thin rind is smooth, even and light hazelnut brown in colour, and bears the cheese's trademark. The paste is moderately close-textured, straw-yellow in colour in the fresh variety. As the cheese matures, the paste becomes hard and crumbly. It is classified as a semi-fat cheese and can be eaten fresh, after 60 days, or aged, after a year. It has a pronounced flavour, initially sweet and becoming gradually more marked, tending towards piquant as the cheese matures. It has a full, persistent aroma, with a hint of milk and hay, with woodland, mushroom and hazelnut undertones.



SCHIZ





## SCHIZ

SEMI-COOKED, SEMI-SOFT CHEESE

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*Production area:*  
Province of Belluno

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*Milk:*  
Full-fat and semi-skimmed cows' milk

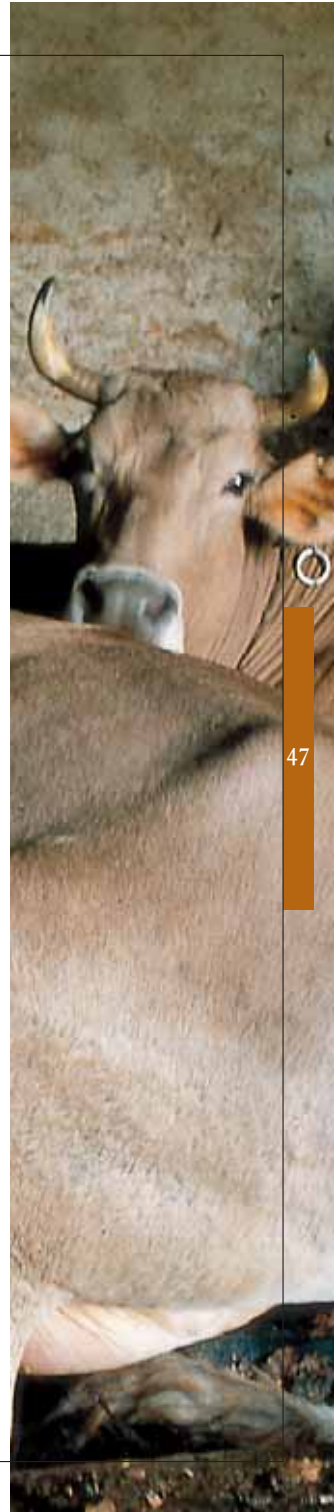
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*Maturing:*  
Eaten as fresh as possible

Rather than actually being a particular type of cheese, Schiz was originally a way of preparing and eating cheese which was peculiar to the Belluno area. In the mountain dairy huts or *latterie turnarie* (rotational dairies), where cheese was made according to traditional methods, the curd obtained from semi-skimmed milk was removed from the pot and pressed into the cheese moulds; the excess which seeped out of the moulds was trimmed off and shaped into strips of cheese which were then cut up into pieces and cooked in a pan. This fresh cheese, cooked in a sauce made by adding cream and/or milk, was served with the traditional polenta. Schiz is therefore nothing other than the immediate use of a fresh cheese, a source of food used particularly by the mountain dairy herdsmen in the months spent up in the summer pastures.

Today, Schiz has become a typical cheese, produced with full-fat cows' milk. The milk is heated back up to the temperature it had at the time of milking, around 35° C. When the rennet is added, the protein substances coagulate and form the curd. The curd is cooked briefly to obtain Schiz, a soft, semi-cooked cheese, which is pressed into square-shaped moulds, which makes it easier to cut into slices. Lightly pressed and unsalted, it is sold extremely fresh.

Schiz is a genuine, versatile cheese which can be used in a multitude of recipes: starters, first courses, main courses and even sweets.



# TOSELLA



## TOSELLA

FRESH, SOFT CHEESE

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### *Production area:*

The western part of the province of Belluno and the seven municipalities of the Asiago plateau (Vicenza)

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### *Milk:*

Full-fat and semi-skimmed cows' milk

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### *Maturing:*

Best eaten immediately

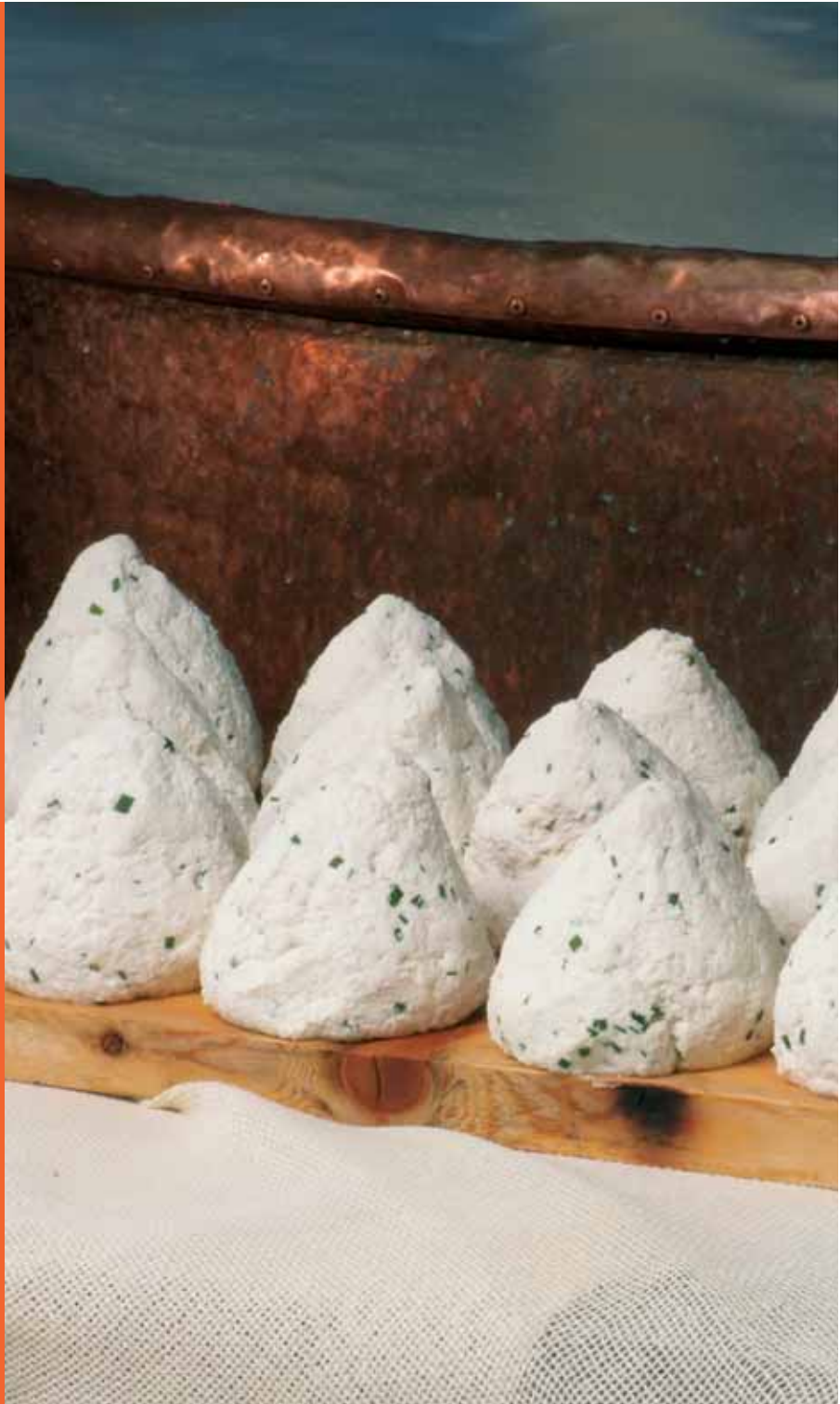
*La Tosella cheese is traditionally made in a very similar way to the more famous Schiz, well known throughout the province of Belluno. It is a specific product of our malghe (alpine dairy huts); it was originally eaten only by the mountain dairy herders who used to put aside a small portion of the curd of the more highly regarded malga cheese (which they could sell), in order to guarantee their daily survival. Today La Tosella is highly appreciated, like Schiz, as a genuine, traditionally produced mountain dairy cheese. It is produced and can be enjoyed when the livestock graze up on the mountain pastures, from May to September.*

La Tosella is a fresh, soft cheese which should be eaten as soon as possible after production. It has a fine, pure white colour and may be salted to taste just before eating. It can be enjoyed grilled or in breadcrumbs, or roasted in the oven, accompanied by a bottle of fine Prosecco in front of an open fire.





# ZIGHER



## ZIGHER

RAW, SOFT CHEESE

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*Production area:*

Comelico Superiore and Alto Agordino areas

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*Milk:*

Skimmed cows' milk  
Buttermilk curd,  
left over from butter making

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*Maturing:*

Maximum 2 months

*At one time this cheese was produced in a vast area which went from the Val Pusteria, to the Val d'Isarco to the Belluno Dolomites. Its name may date back to Celtic times (from tsgros=cheese), or perhaps more simply from the German Ziege, or goat. It is produced by the Genzianella Farming Cooperative in Padola di Comelico Superiore and the Cooperative Dairy in Livinallongo del Col di Lana.*

Zigher has an irregular cone, or pear shape, and weighs between 300 g. and 1 kg. The paste is soft, greyish-white or yellowish in colour and has an extremely fragrant aroma. It has no rind, but is covered by a thin film which is off-white in colour, tending towards pink. It is classified as a light cheese with a piquant taste. When the curd has been completely drained of whey it is mixed with salt, pepper and chives, hence the characteristic piquant flavour.



# ZUMELLE





## ZUMELLE

SEMI-COOKED, SEMI-HARD CHEESE

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*Production area:*  
Province of Belluno

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*Milk:*  
Raw cows' milk

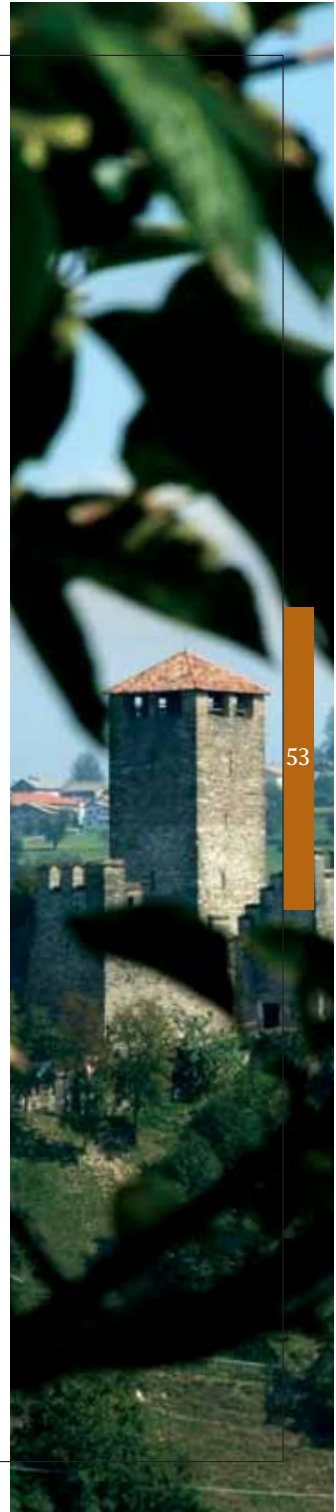
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*Maturing:*  
20 - 30 days

*The name derives from Zumelle Castle, a fortress dating back to Roman times overlooking the Valbelluna in the municipality of Mel, situated along the route of the Via Claudia Augusta which, in Roman times, linked Altino, in the province of Venice, with Augusta, the present-day Augsburg in Bavaria. The castle, extremely well preserved, hosts cultural events and has a restaurant. It is has a particular charm on account of its position, discreet yet clearly visible from everywhere in the Val Belluna.*

Zumelle cheese has a cylindrical shape, with a height of 7-9 cm, diameter of 30-34 cm and weight per uncut piece of 6-7 Kg. The rind is white, tending towards straw yellow in colour and the paste is white, pitted with a large number of small holes. It has a delicate flavour and an intense aroma.

The milk used is from Bruna and Bruno Alpina breeds of cows, which are particularly robust and able to withstand the significant temperature differences in mountain areas, and are fed on fodder with a complex variety of aromas.



# OTHER TYPICAL PRODUCTS

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## **MOUNTAIN DAIRY RAW MILK BUTTER**

Production: Province of Belluno  
Milk: Freshly-milked raw cows' milk

*Butter is the dietary fat obtained from milk, produced for centuries in the mountain dairy huts. It has a parallelepiped shape because of the wooden moulds used during the solidification process. The pats can be personalized with particular decorations. The butter looks uniform, compact and shiny and it should not contain too much water, i.e. drops of water should not be visible upon cutting. It has a characteristic, straw-yellow colour, which varies according to the plants in bloom at the time where the cows graze. The scent is reminiscent of mountain pastures.*

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## **RICOTTA**

Production area: Province of Belluno  
Milk: Cows' milk

*Ricotta cannot be considered a cheese, because it is obtained from whey, a by-product of the curd of the milk rather than the curd itself. It is a fresh product, white in colour, with a soft consistency and a sweet taste. It is placed on sale immediately after production and keeps for 3 days at a temperature of 4 °C. If it is not eaten fresh, after salting the ricotta can be smoked with green conifer wood, by placing it for a few days on wooden racks on the chimney of the hearth. Smoked ricotta has a cylindrical or truncated cone shape and a dark rind. It is close-textured, with a more or less pronounced smoky taste depending on the intensity of the smoking process.*

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## **CACIOTTA**

Semi-cooked, semi-soft cheese

Production area: Province of Belluno  
Milk: Full-fat cows' milk

*Cylindrical in shape, with a diameter of 10-12 cm and a weight of 800g. White, smooth, uniform, soft-type paste. Classified as a semi-fat cheese. The matured rind is straw-yellow in colour. Sweet, delicate, buttery taste and a fresh, milky aroma.*

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## CACIOTTA CIPOLLINA

Semi-cooked, semi-soft cheese

Production area: Bios Valley  
Milk: Full-fat cows' milk

*Cylindrical in shape, with a diameter of 12 cm and a weight of 800g. White paste, with little pieces of chopped chives, almost no holes. Classified as a semi-fat cheese. The matured rind is straw-yellow in colour. Delicate taste and a milky aroma with a note of chives.*

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## CAMOLINO

Semi-cooked, soft cheese

Production area: Valbelluna  
Milk: Full-fat cows' milk

*Cylindrical in shape, with a diameter of 28 cm and a weight of 4.5 kg. Straw-yellow coloured paste, fairly hard, moist, pitted with a few small holes. Classified as a full-fat cheese. Yellow, even, almost imperceptible rind. Sweet, marked flavour, pleasant to the taste. Sweet, full after-taste. Milky, creamy aroma. The name derives from Camolino, in the municipality of Sospirolo, where it is produced by the local Cooperative dairy, which is known for its commitment to quality and to the production of cheeses for a niche market.*

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## GRESAL

Semi-cooked, soft cheese

Production area: Valbelluna  
Milk: Full-fat cows' milk

*Cylindrical in shape, with a height of 6-7 cm, diameter of 30 cm and a weight of 5 kg.*

*Pale straw-yellow in colour, consistency somewhere between soft and semi-hard, irregularly pitted with small holes. When it is very mature the paste becomes crumbly. Classified as a semi-fat cheese. Can be eaten fresco (matured for 30-50 days) or mezzano (70-90 days). Slightly uneven rind, pale, slightly yellowish in colour. Sweet, smooth, milky taste with creamy undertones, slightly, pleasantly acidic; aftertaste of hazelnut. Clean, markedly milky, creamy aroma in the fresh variety and marked, slightly piquant aroma in the more mature variety. The name derives from the Gresal stream, which flows near the Sedico Dairy Cooperative where it is produced.*

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## CHERZ

Semi-cooked, semi-soft cheese

Production area: Cherz mountain dairy hut in Livinallongo del Col di Lana

Milk: Full-fat cows' milk

*Cylindrical in shape, with a diameter of 34-36 cm and a weight of 6 kg. White paste, tending towards pale straw-yellow, unevenly pitted with a small number of holes. Classified as a semi-fat table cheese. Full, rounded, mellow flavour, with a very slight aromatic aftertaste of hay. Slightly milky aroma, with a hint of yoghurt. The name comes from the mountain dairy situated in the north of the province in the Ladin municipality of Livinallongo (Fodom).*

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## CIVETTA

Semi-cooked, semi-fat cheese

Production area: Agordino area, Biois Valley

Milk: Cows' milk

*Cylindrical in shape, with a diameter of 30-32 cm and a weight of 5-6 kg. Paste which varies in colour from white to pale straw-yellow, close-textured and pitted throughout with small, regular holes. Classified as a semi-fat table cheese and as a grating cheese when mature. Even rind, straw-yellow in colour with some darker streaks. Mellow flavour, with a hint of butter, very slight acid notes, nutty aftertaste. Pleasant, fragrant, slightly acidic, marked aroma of milk and fodder. The name derives from Monte Civetta, overlooking the area where the cheese is produced.*

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## FOCOBON

Semi-cooked, semi-fat cheese

Production area: Agordino area, Biois Valley

Milk: Cows' milk

*Cylindrical in shape, with a diameter of 40 cm and a weight of 6-7 kg. Straw-yellow coloured paste, smooth and close-textured, evenly pitted with medium-sized holes. Even, pale yellow crust. Sweet, fragrant flavour with a marked buttery note, extremely pleasant, persistent, slightly bitter aftertaste. Agreeable, marked fresh aroma with a creamy scent. The name derives from the Focobon peak, which towers above the Biois Valley and Canale d'Agordo.*



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## SPRES

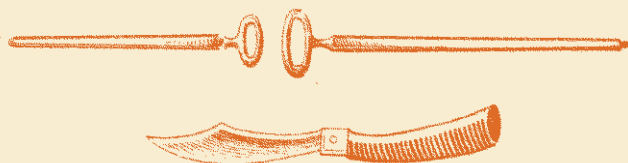
Semi-cooked, semi-fat cheese

Production area: Agordino Basin, Biois Valley

Milk: Full-fat milk

*Cylindrical in shape, with a height of 6-8 cm, diameter of 20-25 cm and a weight of 3.5-5 kg Moderately close-textured paste, white/straw-yellow in colour; generally without holes, or where they are present, pitted with numerous, uniform holes. Smooth, pale-coloured rind. Table cheese, with a sweet, delicate flavour initially, which becomes sharper as it matures. Its origins date back to the times of the subsistence economy when the families from the alpine valleys had to make their own dairy products at home during the periods in which the latterie turnarie (rotational dairies) were closed (spring and autumn).*

*By a strange coincidence, we can find a cheese of the same name (Spres) in the Ossola and Vigezzo valleys in the province of Novara.*



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## COMELICO

Semi-hard cheese

Production area: Comelico Superiore, Danta di Cadore, Santo Stefano di Cadore, San Pietro di Cadore, San Nicolò di Comelico.

Milk: Produced mainly with milk from Bruno-Alpina cows.

*Cylindrical in shape, with a diameter of 30 cm, height of 8 cm and a weight of 5 kg. Soft, light brown rind and straw-yellow paste pitted with regular, medium-sized holes. Sweet flavour. Typical, traditional dairy cheese, dating back a long way. In the members' book of the Genzianella Cooperative Dairy in Padola we can find specific information on the history of the cheese and how it was originally produced.*

# ORGANIC CHEESES

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## ORGANIC LATTERIA ALPAGO

Semi-cooked, soft cheese

Production area: Alpago and Cansiglio

Milk: Cows' milk

*Cylindrical in shape, with a diameter of 30 cm and a weight of 5 kg. Pale, straw-yellow in colour, pitted with a small number of small holes, smooth consistency. Classified as a semi-fat cheese. Smooth, uniform rind, with some uneven parts, white in colour, tending towards straw-yellow.*

*Sweet, creamy, milky flavour, with an almondy aftertaste when the maturation process is complete. Fresh aroma with grassy and floral notes.*

*The name derives from the area where the milk is produced, the Alpago, where it is made into cheese in the Farmhouse Cheese-Making Centre on the plateau of Tambre, Spert and Cansiglio.*

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## ORGANIC CANSIGLIO

Semi-cooked, hard cheese

Production area: Cansiglio area

Milk: Full-fat cows' milk

*Cylindrical in shape, with a diameter of 30-35 cm and a weight of 5-6 kg. Pale straw-yellow in colour, darkening to very pale hazelnut as the cheese matures. Elastic and close-textured. Imperceptible holes. Classified as a semi-fat cheese. Three varieties are available: fresco (fresh), mezzano (medium) and stagionato (mature). Smooth, uniform rind, with some uneven parts, white in colour, tending towards straw-yellow.*

*The fresh variety has a sweet, pungent flavour, which gains in piquancy as the cheese matures. Intense aroma. This cheese, the local tradition of which goes back a long way, is made with milk from cows which have been fed for six months on fresh fodder from the pastures. The name derives from the area where it is produced by the Farmhouse Cheese-Making Centre on the plateau of Tambre, Spert and Cansiglio.*

## CASERA DEL CANSIGLIO

Semi-cooked, soft cheese

Production area: Cansiglio area  
Milk: Semi-skimmed cows' milk

*Cylindrical in shape, with a diameter of 22 cm and a weight of 2.5 kg. The paste is straw-yellow in colour, dense and firm, pitted with a large number of medium-sized holes. Classified as a low-fat cheese. Even, pale-coloured rind. Full, sweet flavour, becoming aromatic when fully mature, with a slightly bitter aftertaste. Marked, milky aroma with a slight note of cream and a hint of hay. The cheese, with a local tradition going back a long way, is made with milk from cows which have been fed for six months on fresh fodder from the pastures. The name in Veneto dialect derives from the typical mountain dwelling/refuge. It is produced by the Farmhouse Cheese-Making Centre on the plateau of Tambre, Spert and Cansiglio.*

## ORGANIC PANNARELLO

Semi-fat, soft cheese

Production area: Cansiglio area

*Cylindrical in shape, with a diameter of 25-30 cm, height of 6-8 cm and a weight of 4-8 kg. The paste is creamy white in colour, smooth, close-textured or slightly pitted with holes, and it has a sweet flavour. Classified as a semi-fat cheese. Very thin, striped rind. One of the rising stars of local cheese-making, it is produced by the Farmhouse Cheese-Making Centre on the plateau of Tambre, Spert and Cansiglio.*



# SLOW FOOD PRESIDIUUM

## AGORDINO DI MALGA

Semi-cooked, semi-hard cheese

Production area: Agordino area, Biois Valley

Milk: Semi-skimmed cows' milk

*Our tour to discover the finest cheeses Belluno has to offer comes to a fitting end with a visit to one of the many malghe (mountain dairy huts) to be found in the Agordino area, which stretches from the Marmolada to the Pale di San Martino and the Civetta Moiazza mountain group. Here, the Slow Food organization has identified a product worthy of particular care and attention: Agordino di malga cheese, which has been added to the list of products to be afforded special protection and support through the system of Slow Food Presidia.*

*Amid these famous peaks, summer pasturing is now carried out intensively, thus guaranteeing continuity of production and quality which render this cheese unmistakable. In these high mountain pastures, the Brune and Pezzate Rosse cows graze on a wide variety of grass and flowers, which can later be perceived in the cheese in the form of highly prestigious flavours and aromas. The local dairy herdsman sell the cheese directly and exclusively, both in the summer up in the mountain pastures, when the product is still fresh, and afterwards down in the valley, where the cheese matures and takes on more intense flavours; when it ages even further it is a fine accompaniment to polenta roasted over an open fire and a glass of good red wine in pleasant company.*

It has a cylindrical shape, with slightly convex sides of a height of 5-8 cm, a diameter of 25-35 cm and a weight of 3-4 Kg. The paste is close-textured, crumbly when very mature ; the colour varies from straw-yellow to darker yellow, and the holes present are often unevenly distributed. The rind is uneven and varies in colour. The flavour is full and marked, intense when mature, sometimes with a smoky aftertaste.





# SCHIZ, BELLUNO'S FRESH CHEESE PAR EXCELLENCE

**F**rom the mountain dairy huts where it was originally produced, Schiz has spread throughout the Belluno area, where it has gradually become the most typical and best-known fresh cheese. So let's see how Schiz is made and how it is eaten. The initial stages of the process are the same as for any other cheese, i.e. the milk is poured into the curdling vessel and heated to 35/36 degrees; then the pot is removed from the heat and the rennet (dissolved in warm water) is added and mixed in. To check whether the curd is thick enough, a bowl used to be put in to float. The curd is then returned to the heat, and as it heats it is broken up into little pieces the size of a grain of corn. The mixture is heated further, stirring continuously, up to a temperature of 40 degrees. It is then taken off the heat and left until the solid part sinks to the bottom, from where it is removed from the leftover whey using a cheesecloth. The end result is Schiz, which should be eaten immediately, or at the latest within a few days. Freshness guarantees quality.



# A FEW TASTY RECIPES

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## COUNTRY-STYLE SCHIZ

Cut 500 g. of Schiz into eight slices and brown them in a pan with melted butter and a pinch of salt. Serve hot with slices of well-cooked, yellow polenta, roasted if desired.

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## SCHIZ WITH CREAM

Cut 500 g. of Schiz into eight slices, and brown in butter in an oven dish. Season with a pinch of salt and finally add pouring cream. Place the dish in the oven for a few minutes before serving. Serve with polenta.

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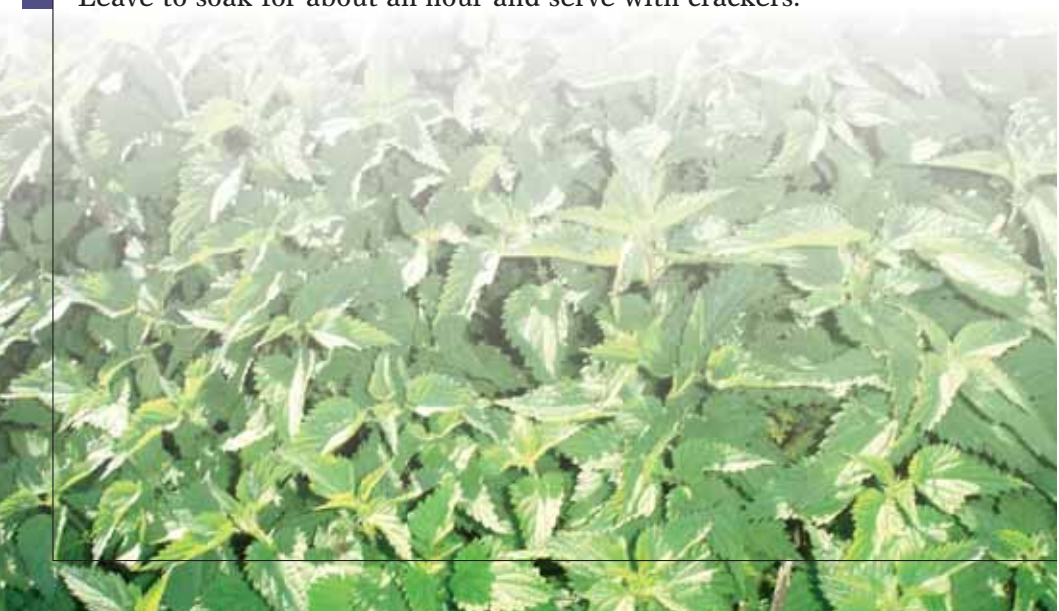
## SCHIZ WITH FINFERLI MUSHROOMS

Clean 300 g. of finferli (*Cantharellus cibarius*) mushrooms and cook them on a moderate heat in a recipient with butter and salt. When the mushrooms are cooked, add 200 g. of Schiz cut into cubes and mix continuously until the cheese takes on the flavour of the finferli mushrooms.

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## SCHIZ SNACK

Place 50g of extra virgin olive oil, a little vinegar, salt and fresh thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*) leaves into a cup and mix together. Pour the mixture obtained over 300 g. di Schiz, sliced thinly and laid in a serving dish. Leave to soak for about an hour and serve with crackers.



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## PIAVE SNACK

Place four slices (50 g. each) of fresh Piave cheese in a buttered, non-stick pan. Quickly heat both sides over a high heat. Remove from the heat, place a slice of cooked ham on top of each slice of cheese and serve on warmed plates.

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## CHEESE AND NETTLE CROQUETTES

*4 potatoes*

*150 g. of Cas  Bellunese cheese*

*100 g. of nettle tips*

*Flour, breadcrumbs, egg, salt, pepper, oil*

Boil the potatoes and mash them. Boil the nettles, drain, squeeze and chop them and add them to the potatoes. Cut the cheese into small cubes and add to the mixture; add salt and pepper and bind with an egg. Roll the mixture into little balls, cover the balls in flour, then roll them in a beaten egg with a pinch of salt and then in the breadcrumbs. Fry a small number of croquettes at a time in a large amount of hot oil. Serve hot, on a bed of fresh tomato sauce.

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## ROLL  OF POTATO AND GRANA CHEESE WITH MALGA AND GIALLETTI MUSHROOMS

*4 medium-sized potatoes*

*50 g. of melted butter*

*salt*

*3 handfuls of grated grana cheese*

*2 egg yolks*

*100 g. of Malga cheese*

*70 g. of smoked bacon*

*300 g. of gialletti mushrooms saut d in olive with garlic and parsley*

Boil the potatoes in their skins, peel and mash. Place the potatoes in a large bowl, add the grana, the melted butter, a pinch of salt and the egg yolks. Mix well. Place the bacon on a baking sheet, forming a rectangle shape (approx. 30 x 20 cm) covering the whole surface, leaving an edge of about 3 cm. Distribute the potato mixture evenly over the bacon. Place the Malga cheese on top and roll the mixture up tightly; seal with a sheet of aluminium foil and bake for 10 minutes at 170  C. Leave to cool a little, then cut into slices. Place two slices, still warm, on each plate and top with two heaped spoonfuls of gialletti mushrooms saut d in olive oil with garlic and parsley. Decorate with a sliver of grana cheese. Serve hot.

# TASTING IS BELIEVING

*A question of smell and of taste*

Cheeses offer an infinite variety of tastes and nuances, and a meticulous, trained approach is required to enjoy the multitude of varieties available to the full.

So, let's set our senses in motion. Before we purchase a cheese, we should use our sense of sight to examine the shape, the colour, the holes, the thickness and any imperfections present on the rind. Then we should use our sense of smell, by sniffing the cheese in order to activate the olfactory sensations. The initial, instinctive impression will be followed by an olfactory impression. Our sense of smell allows us to perceive two olfactory sensations: aroma and odour.

The aroma is given by the volatile substances which come directly from the milk and the enzymes, and is more pronounced in raw milk cheeses; while the odour is formed by volatile substances created by the fermentation process and develops as the cheese matures. Our sense of smell allows us to evaluate the following: the frankness of the olfactory sensations, which must be neat, clean, without unpleasant notes; the fineness, when the pleasantness perceived is also delicate; and lastly, the intensity, measured by evaluating the consistency and the strength of the aroma.

And this brings us to the moment of tasting. Chew the cheese slowly so that the paste becomes moistened by the saliva and warmed by the movement of the mouth, in order for the enzymes present in the saliva to bring out the flavour of the various elements.

The four types of chemoreceptors present on the surface of the tongue allow us to perceive the four basic tastes: sweet on the tip, salty along the sides, sour on the inside and bitter at the back; the central part of the tongue perceives the tactile sensations of smoothness, flouriness, sandiness and graininess.

The balance of the four tastes renders the cheese more or less harmonious in flavour. The taste in the mouth evolves from the initial sweet taste of the first contact to the sour and bitter tastes which create the final impression of the pleasantness of the sample.

The persistence of taste and smell sensations is an important factor in defining the structure and quality of a cheese; it ranges from 4-5 seconds for cheeses which are less aromatic and pungent to 7-10 seconds for those which are more aromatic, pungent and piquant. Chewing also allows the cheese-taster to judge how smooth, hard, oily and palatable the paste of a cheese is.



# ON THE TIP OF THE KNIFE

Each different type of cheese should be cut in a particular way, for cheese gourmets demand just the right amount of flavours, smells, paste and rind.

The choice of cheese knife is therefore important, because the cheese must be cut in such a way as to distribute the aromas and flavours through all the cut parts as evenly as possible.

It is thus recommended that each individual type of cheese should be cut in a different way and with a different instrument, according to the shape, the consistency of the paste and the thickness of the rind. Cheeses with a very delicate paste, such as Zigher or Schiz should be cut with steel wire, or with knives with an offset blade or long, sword-shaped cheese knives with a blade of approximately 40 cm in length and 1-2 cm in height, so that the paste of the cheese does not stick to the back of the blade.

Medium to hard consistency cheeses should be cut with a fairly thick knife about 40cm long; for large, uncut wheels of cheese, a two-handed knife sharpened all the way along the blade should be used.

Very mature cheeses and Grana cheeses should not be cut; they should be broken with the appropriate, specific instruments, following a very elaborate procedure.

Finally, round or square cheeses should be cut like a cake, into triangular pieces, starting out from the centre of the piece; parallelepiped or cylindrical cheeses should be cut into slices.

Small cheeses should be left whole or halved.



## LONG LIVE OUR CHEESES

**H**ow to keep cheese is a very important, sometimes tricky business, and a number of basic rules must be followed. First and foremost, fresh cheeses should be purchased and eaten as soon as possible after production, as they do not keep for long, so it is unwise to buy too much at the one time; it is much better to buy carefully and in moderate amounts, according to the needs of the moment. Only mature cheeses can be bought and preserved vacuum-packed.

Cheeses should be kept in a cool, humid, ventilated place, ideally at a temperature of between 6 and 8 degrees. In the fridge, they should be placed in the vegetable compartment, in their original packaging or in a plastic container, better still if wrapped in aluminium foil or cling film.

Cheeses should be removed from the fridge a couple of hours before serving so that they can reach the right temperature for eating. Serve them with the rind and let guests help themselves to the type they prefer, because the part nearest the rind is usually the tastiest.

There is some debate among experts as to whether cheese should be eaten with or without the rind. Some believe that the rind of soft cheeses, such as those covered with white mould, known as flowered rind, should certainly be eaten; others are of the opinion that the rind is always contaminated in some way and should therefore be removed.

So it is up to the individual to decide how to enjoy his favourite cheese.

## IN GOOD COMPANY

On account of its particular structure and composition, cheese is very much a “self-sufficient” food. However, an ideal accompaniment to fresh, young cheese is a slice of fine bread baked in a wood-burning oven and a glass of lively white wine; mature, aged cheese, on the other hand, goes well with fresh, crusty bread and a robust, harmonious, high-quality red wine.

# MINI-GLOSSARY

**Separation:** physical process in which the fat of the milk or cream tends to separate from the rest when placed in tanks and left to settle. Separation occurs because of the difference in specific weight.

**Curd:** the cheese-like mass thickened by the addition of rennet, which acts as a coagulant.

**Curd, breaking of:** the curd, once formed, is broken up into pieces, sometimes very small, to aid the expulsion of the whey.

**Rennet:** extracted from the membrane of the fourth stomach (abomasum) of calves, lambs or young goats and made into a powder, paste or liquid compound, rennet is added to the milk to coagulate it. May also be of vegetable origin.

**Fascera:** wooden mould, generally round in shape, into which the curd is inserted after being broken up and partially pressed, to drain the whey. The fascera shapes the cheese.

**Full-fat cows' milk:** milk containing all its constituent properties, as it is milked from the cow.

**Semi-skimmed cows' milk:** milk from which part of the fat has been removed (top of the milk, or cream)

**Skimmed cows' milk:** milk from which all, or almost all, of the cream has been removed.

**Holes:** bubbles of varying sizes which form inside the cheese during the fermentation stage of the maturing process. It is characteristic of some cheeses, in which the holes are particularly evident.

**Side:** the side of cylindrical shaped cheeses may be straight, concave or convex.

**Skimming:** removal of the fat of the milk. The skimming process can be carried out in two ways: by means of the natural separation of the cream, which is removed after the milk has been left to settle in a cool place for a sufficient amount of time; or by means of centrifugation, especially in the large-scale dairy industry.

**Coagulation techniques:** in order for milk to be made into cheese, it must first coagulate. To this end, the milk is brought to an ideal temperature (which varies from 18 to 42°C, depending on the type of cheese). Then rennet or milk enzymes are added.

## MOUNTAIN AGRICULTURE ON THE BORDERS. NATURAL PRODUCTS FROM FARMSTEADS AND AGRITOURISM CONCERNS.

The Alta Pusteria area in the South Tyrol region is characterized by the numerous farmsteads scattered throughout the area, which are destined to play an important role in the production of natural products obtained from mountain agriculture; there is a close relationship between these products and the capacity of the area to attract tourists.

“European cultural landscapes originated as a by-product of a local ecological agriculture system, and are a fine example of how natural beauty and practicality can go hand in hand. But this type of farming system, like any other, is experiencing increasing difficulties. What once existed as a single unit (agriculture and landscape) is now artificially split into two, and heavily subsidised: on the one hand, an intensive agrarian economy, increasingly oriented towards industrial models, and on the other, local countryfolk being paid to take care of the environment.” (Karl Ludwig Schweisfurth, Dobbiaco Talks, 1998).

The objective of our project is to give a new meaning to this economic, ecological and cultural union between the agriculture, landscape and economy of our mountain region. The project’s ultimate aim is to support and promote the local, ecologically friendly production of mountain farming produce, thus keeping local skills alive.

In spite of having higher production costs, **the local countryfolk** will have the chance to gain access to new, wider markets for their produce, the motivation to take on new activities,





more contact with the consumer and the opportunity to become less unilaterally dependent.

**Local regional food shops and restaurants**, consumers and business will also reap the benefits, because they will be able to learn who produces the food locally, how and where, and will be able to sell and to purchase the food using different channels.



They will also have the chance to buy products made according to carefully controlled procedures, and with a clear indication of where they come from. For the local people, this will mean recognition of the quality of the natural environment of their *heimat*; for tourists, it will create an emotional and cultural link with the area which offers them hospitality.



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## TRADITIONS IN THE EAST TYROL

With regard to agriculture, the East Tyrol boasts a deeply rooted tradition; it has long since been well-known for the production of high quality, branded farm produce. One example which springs to mind is the famous East Tyrol grappa Pregler, a registered, protected brand; or the Villgrater Natur products of the Villgraten valley, made from sheep's milk and wool, which are well-known and popular well beyond the borders of the Tyrol.



The project which we are developing aims to attract a larger number of visitors, by using these famous local farming products to help market the regions as a tourist destination. **Lienz** will become specialized in tourism linked to the **production of grappa**, markedly specific to that region, while the **Alta Pusteria** tourist board will concentrate on tourism **connected to sheep's wool products**.

**Lienz's local town market** has been held once a week for the last six years and has made a name for itself.



The market is a successful launching pad for the finest regional farm produce, which has made it one of the most popular weekly events in the region with both locals and tourists, either to do some shopping or just to stop and have a chat.

The project aims to create a number of signs which will be of the same type throughout the area covered, and also a single design which will appear on all the various products, thus making them instantly recognisable for the numerous visitors to



the area and thereby offering greater selling opportunities to the firms which produce them. Also, when official events such as trade fairs and local festivals are held, the organizers will take part together with the producers. The importance of the East Tyrol as a

tourist destination, combined with these regional products will create an authentic offer which will give farmers the opportunity to expand their market.



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