

GORGONZOLA CHEESE



NAME

This cheese takes its name from the village of Gorgonzola, on the outskirts of Milan. Legend has it that this cheese was made there for first time in 879 A.D.

HISTORY

It appears that they called it “*stracchino*” in days of old; nevertheless, its date of birth remains a mystery. There are some indications that may lead to an even earlier date for the manufacture of the “*stracchino di Gorgonzola*”. The word “*stracchino*” itself comes from the adjective “*stracco*”, that is to say “*stanco*”, which in Italian means “*tired*”: this leads us to the transhumance of cow herds – back in Roman times – from the higher grounds on alpine pastures down to the lower – lying water – meadows in the Po Valley.

AREA OF PRODUCTION

By law and by tradition there are only two regions in Italy which are entitled to manufacture gorgonzola cheese, and even within these regions, only some provinces are allowed to produce it. For the region of Piedmont these provinces are: **Novara, Vercelli, Cuneo, Biella, VCO** and **Casale Monferrato** with its surroundings, whereas for the region of Lombardy the provinces are: **Bergamo, Brescia, Como, Cremona, Lecco, Lodi, Milano, Monza, Pavia e Varese**. Only milk from the dairy farms of these provinces may be used to produce this cheese and thus bestow on their Gorgonzola the D.O.P. certificate.

AUTHENTICITY

The Gorgonzola cheese has been recognized and recorded from UE in the list of products DOP with Reg. Cee n° 1107/96.

Both the quality and the authenticity of this cheese are guaranteed in various ways. First of all, there is a very strict set of laws spelling out production standards and setting apart the “D.O.P. area” as for the origin of the milk itself; this legislation furthermore stipulates that each Gorgonzola cheese must be branded at the place of production and must bear the name of the manufacturer. Finally, for Gorgonzola to be sold as such, it must be wrapped either in debossed

in

aluminum foil or in specially small printed, specially treated paper. The Consortium for the Protection of the Gorgonzola Cheese was created in 1970 and it has been specially empowered by Government, under the strict supervision of which it operates, to enforce the law. The Consortium has its own officers that see to it that current rules are respected and duly applied.

PRODUCTION METHODS

Gorgonzola is obtained from whole, pasteurized, cows milk which is poured into cauldrons at a temperature of approximately 30° C., with the addition of rennet and blue mold spores. In due course a curd forms, and the curd is broken down and gathered in hemp sieve-cloths and then put to settle in wooden molds each of which holds between 14 and 15 kgs. (30 – 33 lbs.) of curd. When the matter hardens somewhat, the cloths are taken away and the cheese is let to “bleed” (get rid of its whey) for a few hours, until it has attained the right degree of acidity. It is then stock-piled in the “Purgatory” (small aging storerooms kept at 20/22° C., with a humidity of 95%) for 3/4 days, until the whey clearing phase is over. After that the cheese is salted with a great deal of care and expertise and it will then age for approximately 60 days. In the course of the first three weeks the cheeses are poked with large metal needles, to let air into the inner paste, so as to allow blue mold to naturally develop; this is where the cheese gets its typical blue-green veins, which make it truly unique.

NUTRITIONAL VALUES

Gorgonzola is a soft, fat, raw paste, erborinated cheese, produced exclusively with milk from the D.O.P. area. No less than 220 pounds of milk are required to obtain one cheese, the weight of which, once seasoned, is approximately 12 kgs. (26,5 lbs). Gorgonzola is rich in mineral and vitamin contents. For instance, 100 grs (3,53 oz.) of Gorgonzola contain: 19 gr. of Protein – 27 gr. of Fat - 420 mgs. of calcium – 360 mgs. of phosphorus and vitamins: A = 190 mcg – B1 = 25,7 mcg – B2 = mcg 388 – B6 = mcg 174 – B12 = mcg 0,7 – PP = mcg 194 – Pantothenate acid = mcg 278 and Energetic Value equal to 330 Kcal/1375 kjoule.

PRODUCTION AND EXPORT

Gorgonzola is being produced at present by some 40 cheese dairies which range anywhere between the small family business to the large-scale industrial concern. However, no matter what the production scale, this is a cheese which requires a great deal of manual handling.

The average yearly production ranges around 4.000.000 blocks of cheese, which amount to approximately 48,000,00 tons, of which 13,000,00 tons are exported.

INGREDIENTS

Pasteurized cow milk, salt, rennet