

LEGENDS *from* EUROPE



Grana Padano®

Great versatility. Temptingly tasty. Awesomely popular. Ancient roots. Authentically European.

PO RIVER VALLEY ORIGINAL

“Grana” is an Italian word referring to the cheese’s granular, crumbly texture, while “Padano” refers to its home in the fertile Po River Valley (*Pianura Padana*). Production takes place across a defined area of northern Italy, extending from Piedmont in the west to the Veneto in the east, including the provinces of Trento and Piacenza. The milk, giving Grana Padano its special qualities, comes entirely from this specific territory. The origins of this popular cheese — 4 million wheels are sold each year — date back to the 12th century when local monks embraced cheese making as a way of preserving milk. Grana Padano was one of the first PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) cheeses recognized by the EU early in 1996.

FROM MILK TO WHEELS

Strict dairy farming practices, including a special diet for the cows, result in milk with excellent flavor and nutritional value. Once the cream separates naturally, the raw milk is partially skimmed and poured into traditional copper vats. A natural whey starter from the previous day’s cheese making is added, along with rennet. Once coagulation occurs, the curd is chopped into small grains with the aid of a traditional instrument called a “*spino*.” The curd is gently heated and stirred, and after a resting period, the mass of fresh cheese is divided into “twin” wheels;



these are wrapped in linen cloths and placed in molds in order to shape the freshly made cheese. Later on a special stamp wrapped around the new wheels imprints them with tiny dotted lozenges spelling out the words “Grana” “Padano” on what will become the rind; wheels also carry marks that allow them to be traced back to their place of origin: this is the casein plaque that guarantees the traceability of each wheel. Finally, before the aging process begins, the wheels are soaked in brine for around 23 days.

CERTIFIED AUTHENTIC FLAVOR

After 9 months of aging, Grana Padano wheels are carefully tested for appearance, aroma and texture by technicians of the Consorzio Tutela Grana Padano, a non-profit producers’ association born in 1954. Only after the cheese passes this test is it fire branded with the certification mark designating it as Grana Padano PDO. The certification process used by the Consorzio follows rigid standards established by Italian law. Cheese aged 9 to 16 months has a pale yellow color, with a mild, milky and delicate flavor—perfect as a topping for casseroles, meats and vegetables, as an appetizer ingredient, or as shavings on a salad. Straw-colored Grana Padano aged more than 16 months has a firmer, more granular consistency and crumbles when cut. Calcium lactate crystals (white dots) begin to show and the cheese develops a more assertive, slightly tangy taste that makes it ideal for grating or serving as a table cheese.

LONGER-AGED CHEESES

Wheels aged over 20 months must pass further quality tests before being fire branded with the “Riserva” mark. This longer-aged cheese has a deep golden color, full flavor and a more crunchy texture. Its aroma and flavor qualities are suggestive of hay, nuts and dried fruit. Grana Padano Riserva over 20 months is wonderful as an ingredient in many dishes and is at its best at home when served with fruit, nuts and honey on a luxurious cheese platter.

NUTRITIONALLY SPEAKING

Rich in nutrients and very digestible, Grana Padano is a healthful choice for children, the elderly, athletes—and the entire family. A normal one-ounce serving provides about 30 percent of the recommended daily intake of calcium, important for bone growth and maintenance, as well as other bodily functions. It is also a high-quality source of protein, as well as numerous vitamins and antioxidants. Due to lengthy aging, Grana Padano is lactose free and easy to digest, which make it ideal in the diet of athletes and active people. 🍷



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