

LEGENDS *from* EUROPE



Montasio®

*Mountain origins. Delightfully versatile.
Seriously crafted. Universally respected.
Authentically European.*

FROM A UNIQUE LAND

Montasio is a firm cheese that ranges in color from ivory to straw yellow and has a well-balanced flavor that pleases virtually everyone. It is an easily digestible source of protein and calcium. Montasio is made from raw cow's milk and is notable for the small holes that dot the cheese. It is no accident that the "M" in Montasio's logo resembles mountain peaks, for this fine cheese takes its name from Montasio, a mountain in the Alps of Friuli Venezia Giulia, in the northeastern corner in Italy.

During spring and summer, the cows climb to pristine terraced pastures to feed on wildflowers and grasses in the crisp mountain air, producing rich milk that is ideal for cheese making. The origins of Montasio can be traced back to a 17th century mountain monastery renowned for its cheese. Eventually the techniques were shared with other Friuli Venezia Giulia and Eastern Veneto cheese makers, including those at lower altitudes and on the plains.



HOW MONTASIO EARNED ITS LOGO

In 1924, a cheese makers' school was the first to establish standards for Montasio and, through the artisans it trained, to spread that knowledge. As Montasio's reputation grew, its producers decided to join forces to define the boundaries of the production zone, set standards and protect the name from sound-alike imitators. In 1984, they formed the Consorzio per la Tutela del Formaggio Montasio, consisting of milk and cheese producers, as well as the cheese *affineurs* ("agers"). Montasio was long ago inducted into Europe's "hall of fame" for fine foods — it was designated a PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) product by Italy in 1986 and by the European Community in 1996. To this day, Montasio is the only cheese from Friuli Venezia Giulia to receive this honor.

MEETING HIGH QUALITY STANDARDS

The first of the Consorzio's four "commandments" for making Montasio dictates the cheese be made only in an approved zone of production that includes Friuli Venezia Giulia, as well as the provinces of Belluno and Treviso and parts of Padua and Venice. Second, the nutrient-rich cow's milk must be produced in the same zone. Third, the milk is processed using "soft technology," a method of gently heating the milk so as to preserve the beneficial microbial flora believed to give the cheese its characteristic taste and nutritional qualities. Each company is inspected by an independent authority that certifies the cheese Montasio.

AGED FOR VERSATILITY

Depending on how long Montasio has been aged, its qualities change in subtle ways. The stages of aging for the 12 to 15 pound wheels consist of *fresh* or *Fresco* (60 to 120 days), *medium* or *Mezzano* (121 days to 10 months), *mature* or *Stagionato* (10 to 18 months) and *extra-mature* (more than 18 months). *Fresco* and *Mezzano* are the most common stages of Montasio imported into the United States. Younger cheeses are ivory in color and dotted with small holes. They possess a mild, delicate flavor and are delicious on a cheese platter with pear wedges or other fresh fruit, as a sandwich component or for making a classic Friulan cheese crisp called a *frico*, which is cooked in a hot skillet. With further aging, Montasio turns a mellow golden color, becomes firmer and develops bolder, more full-bodied qualities. Grated, it adds wonderful depth to pastas, sauces and other dishes. 🍴



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