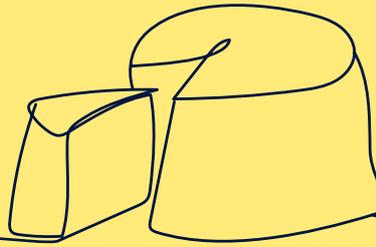


CHEESE



Cheese is a tasty, convenient and versatile food that has been a significant part of our diet for thousands of years. Cheese is packed with key nutrients and plays an important role as part of a healthy diet. We are spoilt for choice when it comes to Australian cheese, it adds flavour to many favourite dishes – lasagne, pasta, and toasties to name a few. Plus, cheese is the ultimate entertainer.

What's in cheese?

Natural cheese is made from four basic ingredients: milk, salt, starter culture or 'good bacteria' and an enzyme called rennet. Salt plays a vital part in the cheese making process. It is crucial for transforming liquid milk into cheese; it plays an important role in flavour, texture and moisture control; and, it acts as a natural preservative.

There are a huge range of cheeses available to suit everyone's taste and health needs. Generally, hard cheeses, such as cheddar, have the highest amount of nutrients in a serve, compared to other varieties such as cottage cheese which often contain more water per gram.

Cheese and health

Cheese naturally contains many important nutrients such as protein, vitamin A, vitamin B12, riboflavin, phosphorus and zinc. In fact, cheese is the second largest source of calcium in the Australian diet, which is important given that one in two Australians are not getting enough calcium in their diet each day. Calcium is an important nutrient for health, particularly bone and dental health.

The unique balance of proteins in cheese has been repeatedly shown to have beneficial effects on satiety and feelings of fullness after eating, which can reduce subsequent food intake at the next meal. Cheese has a low glycaemic index (GI), which is another factor that has been associated with increased feelings of fullness and reduced feelings of hunger.

Unfortunately, the nutritional benefits of cheese are sometimes overlooked due to its salt and fat content however; the Australian Dietary Guidelines state that eating both regular and reduced-fat cheese, milk and yoghurt is linked with a reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, stroke and hypertension (high blood pressure).

Furthermore, Australia's leading expert in public health, the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), has reviewed the body of evidence for the relationship between eating milk, yoghurt or cheese and weight. The review found no link between eating milk, yoghurt or cheese and weight gain or risk of obesity in adults.

Cheese and cholesterol

Contrary to popular belief, cheese can be enjoyed in a well-balanced diet without concern for cholesterol. Danish researchers compared the effect of cheese and butter on cholesterol levels and found cheese did not increase LDL (bad) or total cholesterol. In this study, participants ate about 140g of cheese a day, which is much higher than the Australian serve recommendations. A more recent analysis of studies also supported these findings. It is likely that other beneficial nutrients present within the cheese, such as calcium, or the balance of nutrients within the cheese contribute to these effects.

Cheese and lactose intolerance

Among people diagnosed with lactose intolerance, there is no need to cut out all dairy foods from the diet. There are big differences in the amount of lactose that can be consumed without symptoms developing and individuals should adjust lactose intake according to tolerance.

In fact, most hard cheeses contain virtually no lactose (as it is removed when the curds are separated from the whey in the cheese making process) and therefore, cheeses are usually well tolerated. The table below shows lactose content of some commonly consumed cheeses.

Cheese	Lactose content (g)
Parmesan cheese, 40g	0.0
Cheddar cheese, 40g	0.04
Swiss style cheese, 40g	0.04
Camembert, 40g	0.04
Cream cheese, 22g	0.55
Ricotta cheese, 120g	2.4

Cheese and dental health

Cheese has a unique role to play in dental health. Research has shown that cheese can help prevent the formation of dental caries or tooth decay as it contains important teeth friendly nutrients, such as calcium, phosphorus and casein, helping put minerals back into teeth. This is why a small amount of hard cheese is often recommended after meals and as a good snack choice.

Cheese has also been shown to increase saliva production, helping to neutralise the acids in the mouth after consuming foods and drinks containing sugar.

Are you having enough dairy?

Having enough milk, cheese and yoghurt in your diet is important. Around eight out of 10 Australians fail to get their minimum recommended intake of the dairy food group. Cheese is a tasty way to include more dairy foods – choose from the wide variety of cheeses available to suit your diet and lifestyle.

For tips and information on cheese, such as selecting and storing cheese, preparing a cheese platter and nutrition information visit dairy.com.au/health

FAST FACTS ON CHEESE

It takes 10 litres of milk to make one kilogram of cheese.

When it comes to types of cheese, Australians are spoiled for choice. Australia now produces more than 160 varieties of cheese, each with a unique taste, texture and nutrient mix.

Natural cheeses are gluten-free. For cheeses that have added flavours or are processed, however, check the food label's ingredient list to make sure additional ingredients sourced from wheat, rye, oats or barley aren't added.

The Australian Dietary Guidelines recommend a range of serves from the dairy food group every day depending upon your age and gender – use the table below to see how much milk, cheese, yoghurt and/or alternatives is recommended for you.

Minimum recommended number of serves from the dairy food group

	Age (years)	No. of serves per day
Men	19–70	2 ½
	70+	3 ½
Women	19–50	2 ½
	50+	4
	Pregnant or breast feeding	2 ½
Boys	2–3	1 ½
	4–8	2
	9–11	2 ½
	12–18	3 ½
Girls	2–3	1 ½
	4–8	1 ½
	9–11	3
	12–18	3 ½

*Adapted from: 2013 Australian Dietary Guidelines. The dairy food group includes milk, cheese, yoghurt and/or alternatives.**



*Alternatives include: 250ml soy, rice or other cereal drink with at least 100mg of added calcium per 100ml.