



Geographical Indications

Trademark & Unfair Competition
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Geographical indications

- Not recognized in the U.S.
- Well used in Europe
- Allows a monopoly for appellations of geographic origin
- Monopoly privileges inure to a place (not a firm, as with trademark)
- Examples:
 - Champagne (a.k.a. “sparkling wine”)
 - Parmesan cheese
- Might be protected in the U.S. as collective marks or certification marks, if not currently generic

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WIPO MAGAZINE



Parmesan – The King of Cheeses

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Known as the "King of Cheeses", Parmesan, or Parmigiano Reggiano was first produced by Benedictine and Cistercian monks a thousand years ago. Over the centuries, it has acquired global prominence and is now a hugely popular choice for food-lovers the world over. While this popularity translates into a persistent and healthy demand, it has also resulted in Parmesan becoming one of the most imitated agricultural products in the world. As consumers, how can we be sure that we have purchased "the real deal"? In this article, WIPO Magazine explores how the producers of Parmigiano Reggiano have acquired legal recognition that their cheese is the "one and only" Parmesan.



Only cheese produced according to the rules of the Protected Regulation may bear the distinctive Parmigiano Reggiano name. (Photo: Consorzio del Formaggio Parmigiano-Reggiano)

About Parmesan

The method of producing this hard, grating cheese, which is cooked and not pressed, has changed little over the centuries. Cheese-makers today use the same natural ingredients as their predecessors did (raw milk, rennet and salt) and employ "the same care and craftsmanship". An iconic Italian food, Parmigiano Reggiano is produced in a well-defined area of northern Italy – the provinces of Parma, Reggio Emilia, and Modena and Bologna (on the left bank of the Reno River) and Mantova (on the right bank of the Po River). Many different factors determine the unique quality of Parmigiano Reggiano cheese – from the soils used to produce the fodder on which the cows graze to the salts used in the cheese-making process. Made from a mixture of full fat and skimmed milk, Parmesan is quickly digested and easily assimilated. Vaunted as "a miniature storehouse of concentrated" nourishment, it is rich in proteins, lipids, calcium and phosphorus and low in fat and cholesterol compared to other cheeses.

"The secret of the goodness originates in the place of origin, in the natural feed, and in the high quality milk with no additives." (Consorzio del Formaggio Parmigiano-Reggiano)

AN HISTORICAL PRODUCT

Literary references to Parmesan date back to the 14th century. Boccaccio's 1348 work *The Decameron* relates "...and there was a whole mountain of Parmigiano cheese, all finely grated, on top of which stood people who were doing nothing but making macaroni and ravioli".

An entry by British diarist, Samuel Pepys during the Great Fire of London in 1666 notes that he buried his "Parmezan cheese" to save it from the advancing fire.