

# GOAT CHEESE

**O**ver the past 20 years or so, goat cheese has become one of America's favorite gourmet foods.

Its ubiquitous presence on restaurant menus, in cookbooks and in recipes indicates what a culinary star goat cheese is today. Highly regarded both for its flavor and its versatility, goat cheese is a mainstay of the cheese department.

## ● What is the difference between goat cheese and chèvre?

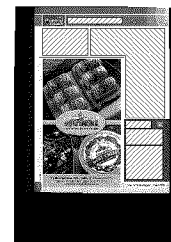
Technically, there is no difference at all. *Chèvre* is the French word that refers to both goats in general as well as goat's milk cheese. The two terms cannot be differentiated by country because many American producers use the French term for their product. France is justifiably famous for both the quality and variety of goat cheese, but many of the most highly regarded versions are made in the U.S. today by talented cheesemakers, varieties like *crottin*, *Chabichou*, and *Saint-Maure*. Goats were actually among the first livestock to be brought to America but they were eclipsed by dairy cattle because of their high output of milk. Goat's milk and goat cheese were "rediscovered" in America in the late 1960s and early 1970s by intrepid cheesemakers-to-be who went to France to learn their craft; hence the word *chèvre* so firmly in our lexicon.

## ● How else can one use goat cheese besides snacking?

Goat cheese is a wonderfully versatile ingredient. It can be used in lieu of other cheeses such as cream cheese, fromage blanc and mozzarella for topping bagels, pizzas, sandwiches and salads, pasta, casseroles, and many other main dishes. Flavored goat cheeses can add a whole new element to simple dishes. For example, cranberry and cinnamon goat cheese is great on morning bagels or toast, while garlic & herb, four-pepper, or sun-dried tomato & basil can make quick and easy hors d'oeuvres when spread on crackers or sliced baguette. Aged goat cheeses can be crumbled over salads or grated over pasta and other hot dishes.

## How Is Goat Cheese Made?

Goat cheese is made in similar fashion to most other cheeses, and it begins with the quality of the milk. The better the milk, the better the cheese. Goats produce far less milk than cows but its flavor profile and molecular makeup are unique.



The milk is then either pasteurized or not. A coagulant is added to instigate the separation of the curds from the whey, as well as certain enzymes that will affect the final flavor and texture of the cheese, depending on the desire of the cheesemaker. When the whey is drained off, the curds are placed in molds, salted and, after a short period of time, are taken out of their molds. Finally, the cheeses are aged anywhere from a few hours to several months depending on the type of goat cheese being made.