

French Cheese – A daily slice of your healthy diet

(Family Features) — French cheese lovers will be happy to know that French cheese, or fromage, is a nutritious choice and a great-tasting staple of a healthy diet. Cheese is a nutrient-rich food, which means a little goes a long way toward providing important daily nutritional benefits like calcium, protein and vitamins. What's more, cheese is a recommended part of one of the world's healthiest eating patterns, the Mediterranean Diet.

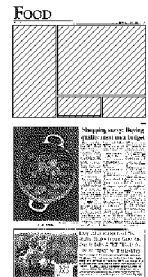
Scientists have been studying the Mediterranean Diet for more than 50 years. The diet is based on the dietary traditions of the southern Mediterranean. It includes eating fruits and vegetables, whole grains, nuts, olive oil — and nutrient-rich cheese in moderation every day. Researchers have linked the Mediterranean Diet to an amazing array of health benefits, from lowering your risk of heart disease to breathing easier to maintaining a healthy weight.

The French diet is grounded in the traditional Mediterranean ways of eating which includes the enjoyment of cheese, fiber-rich bread and wine every day. Nearly 30 years ago, nutritionists were intrigued with the discovery that, despite a diet high in fat, the French had the lowest cardiovascular mortality rate in the industrialized world. Over the years, scientists have struggled to explain this "French Paradox." But now we are beginning to have some answers about heart health and the French food diet, thanks to new research in the field.

What may explain the apparent heart-healthy benefits of the traditional French diet? Cheese, bread and wine — or more accurately, the way these three foods, so essential to the French diet, work together to protect your heart.

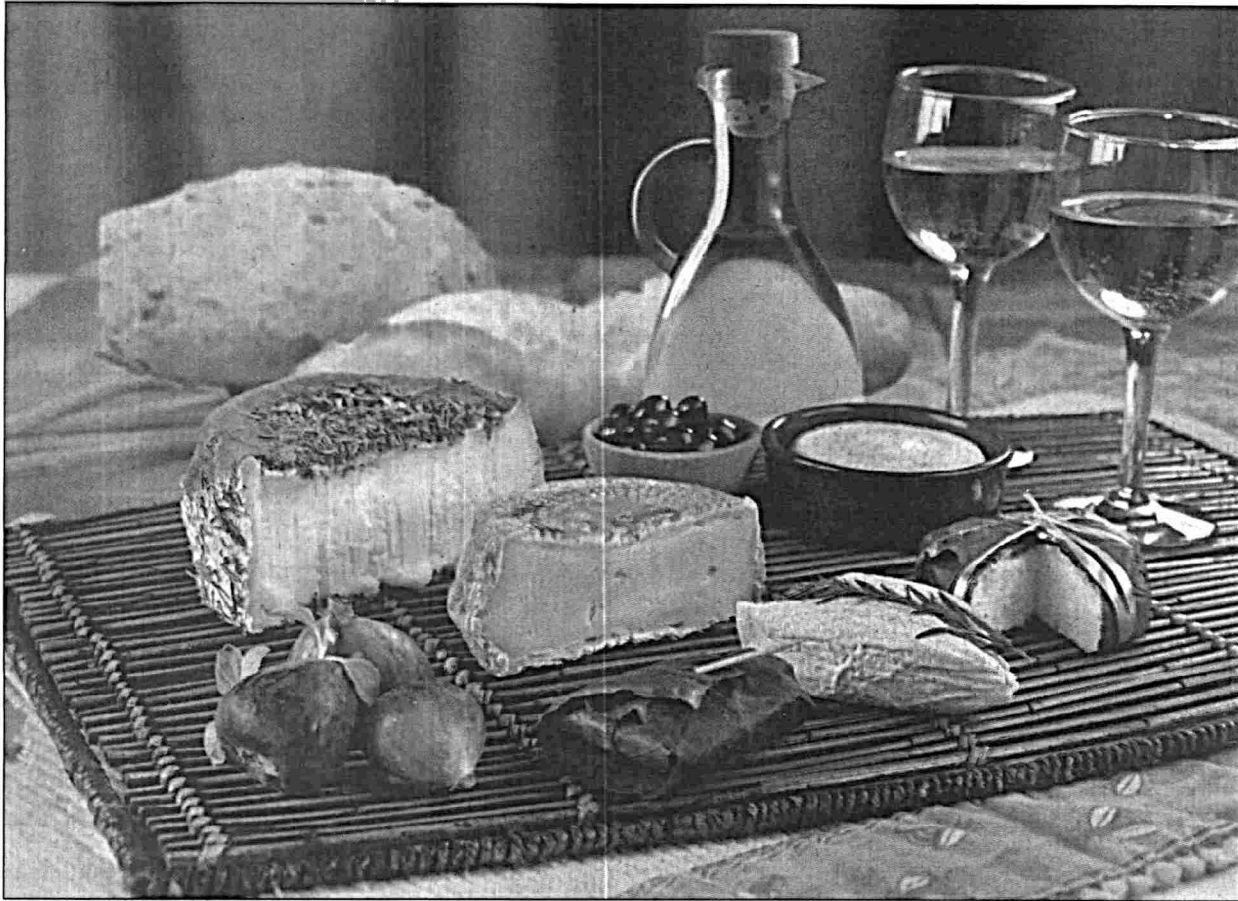
Cheese, it turns out, plays a pivotal role in protecting arteries. The high calcium content in cheese helps your bones and helps the body eliminate certain harmful fatty acids and promotes the beneficial action of other fatty acids. This process works even better when fiber-rich bread is present. Add a little French wine with its positive effects on cholesterol, and you have a powerful trio at work.

Enjoy fromage every day with a slice of recognized cheeses like Brie, Comté, or Roquefort or be adventurous and try one of the hundreds of other mouth-watering French favorites available at specialty cheese



shops, supermarkets and online. For entertaining, consider creating a memorable fromage plate — an easy, crowd-pleasing showcase of the broad variety France has to offer.

You can be comfortable knowing that all The Cheeses of France are healthful, minimally processed and free of artificial growth hormone/rBST. For more information about The Cheeses of France and the French Paradox, visit www.cheesesoffrance.com. For more on The Mediterranean Diet Pyramid eating plan visit http://www.mediterraneanmark.org/html/meddiet/meddiet_pyramid.html.



Provided by Family Features

The Mediterranean Plate: Fleur du Maquis (back row, from left), Casinca Chèvre and Saint-Marcellin; Front Row: Cabécou Feuille (from left), Thym Tamarre and Vache de Chalais.