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The Oldways Cheese Coalition's guide to

SPANISH CHEESE TERMS



The Oldways Cheese Coalition (OCC) inspires people to embrace the joys of the old ways of eating traditional cheeses in healthy amounts.

Since 1999, the OCC has advocated for traditional cheeses as safe, delicious, and culturally and historically significant. We work to ensure that traditional cheeses and artisanal cheesemaking practices are maintained for future generations.

*Learn the vocabulary of Spain's
renowned cheese traditions.*



Añejo – Aged

A process of maturing cheeses in cellars. Añejo is older than “Curado.”

Artesano – Artisanal

May refer to cheeses made using traditional methods. “Artesano” in Spain is used sometimes to denote the use of raw milk, but not necessarily. There is no concrete legal definition for this term. Manchego DOP Artesano is made using raw milk following the Ruling Council guidelines for DOP Manchego cheese (see: www.quesomanchego.es).

Cabra – Goat

Cardo – Cardoon

A type of thistle plant used as a type vegetarian rennet. Commonly used for “torta” style cheeses. It is used in different areas of Spain (Extremadura, Segovia, Canary Islands) and also in Portugal.

Cremoso – Creamy

A texture of the paste of lactic or enzymatic cheeses. Cheeses may be creamy due to a variety of processes in the cheese make and maturation, including the use of molds and bacterium that transform the paste underneath the rind, salt use, or the use of cardoon rennet.

Cuajo – Rennet

A mixture of enzymes used to coagulate milk. There are three commonly-used types of rennet in cheesemaking. Animal: extracted from the abomasum of non-grass-eating calves. Microbial: developed

by inserting coagulant enzymes into microorganisms. Vegetable: many plants have coagulant effects on milk; for example, cardoon used to make torta-style cheeses.

Curado – Matured

Normally refers to cheeses that have been aged for over 3 months.

DOP/PDO – Protected Denomination of Origin

The strictest form of protection given to a food under the European Geographical Indication law. It indicates the geographic origin of a product and the specific processing requirements. In Spanish it is called DOP: Denominación de Origen Protegida.

Finca – Estate

Often describing a cheese producer with an extensive area of land, usually with a historical house, owned by one family.

Leche cruda – Raw milk

Describing milk that has not been heat-treated or pasteurized.

Leche termizada – Thermized milk or Thermalized milk

Thermization involves heating milk at temperatures of around 145–149 °F (63–65 °C) for 15 second. It is a similar process to pasteurization but uses lower temperatures. In Europe, there is a distinction between cheeses made of thermized milk and raw-milk cheeses. However, the United States’ Food and Drug Administration (FDA) places the

same regulations on all unpasteurized cheeses. As a result, cheeses from thermized milk must be aged for 60 days or more before being sold in the United States – the same restriction placed on raw-milk cheeses.

Lingote – Ingot or Brick form

The rectangular form used by some cheese producers.

Oveja – Sheep

Pasteurizado – Pasteurized

In the United States, for the most part all dairy products should be made using pasteurized milk. Some cheeses are allowed to be made with raw and heat-treated or unpasteurized milk as long as they are aged for 60 days at no less than 35°F. By law, pasteurized milk needs to be heated up to 145°F for 30 minutes or 161°F for 15 seconds.

Pastor – Shepherd

Quesería – Creamery or Cheese store

The same word can describe the facility where cheeses are made or the place they are sold.

Quesero/a – Cheesemaker or Cheesemonger

The same word can describe the producer of cheese and the cheese seller. In Spain, the term “quesero” traditionally refers to the cheesemaker. Cheesemongers in Spain are known as “charcuteros.” In other Spanish-speaking countries the term applies indistinctly to both.

Semi curado – Semi-matured

Normally refers to cheeses that have been aged between 1 and 3 months.

Sierra – Mountain range

Torta – Round form

The term “torta” in cheesemaking is used to describe anything that is round in shape and has a soft spreadable paste. “Torta” style cheeses are made with cardoon rennet, and they are gooey inside. Traditionally from Extremadura, Segovia, and the Canary Islands in Spain and northern Portugal.

Retorta by Finca Pascualete.

Finca Pascualete could not use the word “torta” to describe their cheese in the style of the “Torta del Casar,” as their farm and production are not within the limits established by the guidelines of the PDO. The cheesemakers there decided to use the name “Retorta.”

Tradicional – Traditional

May refer to cheeses made using traditional methods like aging on wooden boards or using native cultures. This is not a legal definition, and the term is used in many ways by producers.

Trufa – Truffle

A type of fungus with a strong aromatic smell. It is considered a culinary delicacy and found, especially in France, with the aid of trained dogs or pigs.

Vaca – Cow