Parmigiano Reggiano
Italy
17/12/2010
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Main characteristics/features

‘Parmigiano Reggiano’ is a hard cheese made from unpasteurised cow’s milk, partially skimmed by natural surface skimming. It must be matured for at least 12 months. It can be sold as a whole wheel of cheese, in portions or grated. It is cylindrical in shape and has a diameter of 35 cm-45 cm, height of 20 cm-26 cm and minimum weight of 30 kg. The colour of the body of the cheese is between light straw-coloured and straw-coloured. The taste is fragrant, delicate, flavoursome but not pungent.

Production and processing

The milk comes from cows reared in the defined geographical area. The cows are fed primarily on fodder from the defined geographical area. At least 75% of the dry matter of the fodder must be produced within the geographical area. Feeding stuffs may make up at most 50% by weight of the dry matter of the animal food. The use of silage of any kind is prohibited. The milk must be produced and processed within the defined geographical area. The milk obtained from the evening milking and the morning milking is delivered in a whole unpasteurised state to the dairy. Local whey is added to the milk. Following coagulation, obtained exclusively by the use of calf rennet, the curd is broken up and cooked. After sedimentation, the cheese mass is transferred to the appropriate moulds where markings are affixed. After 2/3 days the wheels of cheese are immersed in brine and then matured for a period of at least 12 months. The minimum 12-month maturing must be carried out in the defined geographical area. After the minimum maturing period, tests are carried out to check compliance with production specifications. The grating, portioning and subsequent packaging operations must be carried out in the defined geographical area.

Geographical area

The defined geographical area comprises the territories of the provinces of Bologna to the west of the Reno River, Mantua to the east of the River Po, Modena, Parma and Reggio in the Emilia Region, Italy.

Link between product and territory

The peculiar physical, chemical and microbiological properties of the milk which ensure the specific characteristics and quality of ‘Parmigiano Reggiano’ cheese are basically due to the manner in which the dairy cows are fed, on a basis of fodder from the area of origin, strictly excluding the use of silage of any kind.

The minimum twelve-month maturing period, carried out within the geographical area, defined by virtue of its specific climatic conditions, is a necessary phase. This ensures that the product obtained from the processing of the milk can acquire, through particular enzyme processes, the suitable characteristics of a ‘Parmigiano Reggiano’ cheese.