

Buying Cheese

Knowing the differences can help your diet plan.

Labels can help you learn the differences between cheese products. Cheese is a common item on most grocery lists, but sometimes a shopper selects cheese without reading and understanding the label.

Natural Cheese

Natural cheese, which starts with fresh milk, is produced by separating milk solids from milk and curdling it with a bacteria culture. The curd is then separated from the whey and aged to produce a variety of cheeses.

The length of aging, or ripening, determines whether the cheese is mild, medium or sharp. The longer the aging, the richer the flavor and the higher the cost.

Pasteurized Process Cheese

The production of pasteurized process cheese starts with a blend of fresh and aged natural cheeses. They are shredded, mixed and heated to blend and develop a uniform flavor, body and texture. The blend may be one or more varieties of natural cheese and may contain pimentos, fruits,

Cheese products may look alike on the shelf, but there are differences in the production and contents of each product. Learn to understand the differences. Then you can buy the right kind for your use and perhaps try a new variety



vegetables or meats. A smoked flavor may be added also.

Cheese Food

When the word "food" is added to pasteurized process cheese, the term identifies it as a product that contains less cheese and more nonfat dry milk or whey solids and water. It has a lower milk fat content and more moisture than process cheese.

Cheese food is milder in flavor, soft and spreads easily. It melts quickly because of the higher moisture content. It may contain other ingredients and have a smoked flavor too.

Cheese Spread

Pasteurized process cheese spread is made like processed cheese food but is higher in moisture and has a lower milk fat content. It is more spreadable than most cheese and may contain flavoring.

Cheese is a good source of protein. Add it to main dishes, salads and sauces. Serve it with fruit and crackers for a nutritional snack. It's high in nutrition because it's a concentrated form of milk.

For more information on buying cheese, contact your local county Extension office.