



Production Area

The entire United States

Producers

Twenty-four cheesemakers

For a list of producers and contact information, visit the Ark of Taste link at: [www.slowfoodusa.org](http://www.slowfoodusa.org)

The Raw Milk Cheese Presidium is administered by the Raw Milk Cheesemakers' Association: [www.rawmilkcheese.org](http://www.rawmilkcheese.org)



# American Raw Milk Cheeses



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The **Slow Food international** organization involving more than 100,000 people from 153 countries on five continents-promotes taste education, fights for the preservation of agricultural biodiversity, organizes events and publishes books and magazines.

Slow Food **Presidia** are local projects that work to protect small-scale producers and to safeguard quality artisan products. Their objective is to guarantee a viable future for local communities by organizing producers, searching out new economic outlets and raising the profiles of tastes and regions.

The **Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity** promotes and coordinates over 300 Presidia in the world.

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Slow Food Foundation  
for Biodiversity

## Cheeses that Honor the Diversity of the Land

Beginning in the 17th century, English and Dutch immigrants and later German and Italian arrivals brought their cheesemaking skills to the New World. They produced American cheeses by making raw milk versions of traditional European cheeses.

Over the past 350 years, American cheesemakers 'domesticated' these cheeses: Dry Jack, Teleme, and Brick are examples of American cheeses based on European originals (Parmesan, Taleggio, and Limburger, respectively). In the mid-19th century, the invention of pasteurization and industrial production resulted in the loss of most small-scale raw milk cheese making in the United States.

Over the past 25 years, American cheesemakers have developed extraordinary handcrafted raw milk cheeses that highlight the unique flavors of the land, soil and climate where it originates. Often invented or based loosely on existing cheeses, American raw milk cheeses are as unique as the cheesemakers themselves and they reflect as much about the cheesemaker's persona as they do their terroir. Hard, soft, cooked curd, washed rind, pressed, wrapped, they vary from huge 40-kilo wheels to tiny



100-gram forms, and are wrapped in leaves, sprinkled with ash, or crusted in salt.

The cheeses included in this Presidium project have a few common denominators: they are made with raw milk from either the cheesemaker's or a local farm, and created by individuals with a strong commitment to sustainable agriculture and artisan production.

In the United States, the sale of raw milk cheeses that are aged less than 60 days is illegal. Due to the lack of a regional identity, the difficulties in collaboration between different producers (they may be hundreds of miles apart), and uncertain and ever changing health and food safety regulations, establishing production standards for American raw milk cheese has been extremely challenging.

Some Presidium cheesemakers work with one cheese, while others make several different types. One result of this innovation is a growing consumer awareness and demand for American raw milk cheese in cities and rural areas. These creative cheesemakers also have an important impact on the working landscape.

## The Presidium

To support efforts in the United States to produce raw milk cheeses, the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity reconsidered the normal structure of a Presidium and focused on American raw milk cheesemakers' needs and goals. The result is a presidium currently involving 24 producers, connected not by historical or geographic links but by common aims: the improvement of quality of American raw milk cheeses and the creation of links between cheesemakers. The members of the Presidium operate on the belief that by respecting the diversity in their soil, pastures and woodlands, their herds and flocks, and the raw milk from their animals, they can produce cheeses that are as nutritious, safe, and wholesome to consume as they are flavorful.

The Presidium Production Protocol developed in 2007 requires cheesemakers to meet the stringent requirements. Presidium cheeses are all made with raw milk from humanely treated animals living on environmentally friendly farms. Each cheese has been evaluated for its overall quality to ensure that the cheese is delicious. Presidium members work actively towards meeting the criteria listed in the Production Protocol. To encourage new Presidium producers and to increase the quality of raw milk cheese production the Protocol commits each cheesemaker who becomes part of the Presidium to work actively towards meeting all of the criteria listed in this document within six years of joining.

