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## Vegetarian Cheese

The term vegetarian cheese might sound redundant to you; after all, cheese is made with milk, which clearly can be obtained without killing an animal. What most people mean when they use the term vegetarian cheese is that the cheese was made with vegetarian rennet.

Some vegetarians are OK eating cheeses made with animal rennet, but many will seek out ones made with vegetarian rennet, especially since the latter are quite prevalent nowadays. So, in a sense, cheese can never be vegetarian because it leads to the indirect slaughter of animals for their meat.

Vegetarians can still eat great cheese these chives from. Animal product milk is the basis of all cheese, but you don't take an animal's life when you milk it. True enough, but there is another component of cheese, one most people don't usually consider, that may render your beloved cheese a non-vegetarian product.

This coagulation, which separates the milk into curds and whey, is an important initial step in cheese making. Most

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commercial cheeses add an enzyme-based substance called rennet to help this process along. The enzymes in rennet are chymosin and rennin, but those two words are often used interchangeably, and many people, even cheese makers, just use the term rennet or rennin to describe any enzyme in cheese making that assists in milk coagulation. Historically, all cheese has not been made with rennet. Commercial cheese makers need to be able to replicate their products consistently and reliably, and it would be extremely difficult to reproduce the precise composition and strength of any given lot of stinging nettle solution or to know what quantity of dried sunflower powder to use per batch of milk.

First of all, some cheeses do not require rennet for production. These enzymes are important because they are the ingredients that cause milk to coagulate and eventually become cheese. Many cheese products produced in the United States do contain a coagulating enzyme derived from either beef or swine.

A few pure vegetarian vegan cheeses do exist, but are less similar to regular cheese in texture, and they do not melt quite the same. The first question one might ask is; what makes a cheese suitable or unsuitable for vegetarians? Cheeses

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can be made with any type of milk, and in the case of vegan substitutes, soya or rice milk, for example. The following simplified description for making cheddar cheese goes some way towards explaining the procedure. Many people may be surprised to learn that not all cheese is vegetarian.

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Thankfully, vege rennet is becoming increasingly popular and recent developments in the production of vegetarian rennet from non meat sources means that this trend is likely to continue. Vegetarian cheese melts well and can be used hot as well as cold. Cheeses that contain 'vegetarian rennet' or 'microbial enzymes' will be suitable for vegetarians. These are typically soft cheeses such as cottage and some cream cheeses. I have tried vegetarian cheeses before and I have been always been disappointed with the flavor and texture, so I wasn't expecting a cheese alternative that actually tastes delicious and feels right in the mouth.

Vege rennet can be made in a few different ways, but never involves killing an animal directly. There are vegetarian rennets derived from fungi, plants, as well as lab-created

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genetically engineered rennet that otherwise mimics the real thing. Cypress Grove are made with vegetarian rennet. Thankfully, vege rennet is becoming increasingly popular and recent developments in the production of vegetarian rennet from non meat sources means that this trend is likely to continue. Vege rennet is known as synthetic rennet, and one of the reasons this is popular with cheese makers is because the quality is consistent and the cost is low. In fact, the look, taste and consistency of cheese produced with vegetarian rennet is identical to that of cheese from non vegetarian sources. It is useful to make a note of different kinds of vegetarian rennet before shopping as this will help to make the identification of vegetarians safe cheese easier.

<http://www.vegetarianconcepts.com/>

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