



Cheese from the Spanish cuisine

When we got down to Spain, we lacked a really well-stocked cheese shop with European cheeses. As the years go by you learn more about Spain's cheeses and they have partially replaced the cheese we have been accustomed to from Sweden .

All know the **Manchego cheese**, made of milk from Manchego sheep. *Already the ancient Greeks* as the saying goes, and in this case it is not entirely wrong. Archaeological finds of mutton and press moulds shows that even in the Bronze Age exerted sheep breeding and made cheese. Later praises Greeks and Romans, the tasty Spanish cheese. When the Moors invaded Spain they brought with them a powerful breed who enjoyed the La Mancha arid climate. The cheese was to begin with food for the shepherds where they were sitting out on the hillsides. Don Quixote and his faithful companion, Sancho Panza was travelling in Castilla - La Mancha and fought against the windmills. Surely, they had had Manchego cheese by shepherds – if it had been a true story.

Not until the early 1800s, cheese production is gaining momentum. Queso Manchego did well in the competition and since 1984 it carries the DO (Denominacion Origen). On some labels will say "artesanal" which means that the cheese is made from raw milk. The ribbed herringbone pattern is a remnant from the days when you pressed cheeses wrapped in esparto gras. The cheeses are sold in three main groups:

- **Fresco**. Sold after 60 days of storage.
- **Semi-curado**. A little more compact and have been stored for at least 4 months
- **Curado**. A hard cheese matured for at least 6 months.
- **Añejo** stored longer.

There are many more brand names used from local cheesemakers.

Manchego is good as a tapas and can be eaten with for example fig jam.

Another cheese area is **Extremadura**. Two of Spain's best cheeses is from this part of the country; Queso de la Serena and Torta del Casar. They are made of sheep's milk. **Serena** cheese comes from the south eastern part of the province of Badajoz. The cheese is made with milk from Merino sheep. The cheese matures and becomes creamy. When you cut it, it will float out and smell strongly.

The second cheese from the same area is called the **Torta de Casar** and is made with milk from Churrala sheep and texture is also liquid. Many cut a hole in the cheese and eat with a spoon.

Asturien is another area with many types of cheese. The most famous cheese from this area is **Queso de Cabrales**. The Spanish writer Benito Pérez gave the cheese name "a fragrant infection". The cheese is made with three milks, cow, goat and sheep milk. The characteristic of Cabrales cheese mould formation occurs in limestone caves, and reminiscent of the production of Roquefort cheese. Also, this cheese is protected by D.O. labelling.

Another good cheese has been a bit overlooked is the **Queso Gamonedo**, at least as good as Cabrales.

But there are many more type of cheese. Here are some examples of cheeses that we like to serve:

Tetilla - a mild creamy milk based cheese, from Galicia. Recognized for it's drop form.

San Simón - Similar appearance and from the same area, with an exciting flavour as the cheese is smoked over a birch fire.

Torta del Casar - strong sheep's milk cheese from Extremadura, made with milk from Churra sheep. Become almost liquid at room temperature. Something for Gorgonzola Lovers?

Ibores - from the same area. The cheese is rubbed frequently on with oil and paprika.

Picon - a cheese made of three milks, aromatic, and often wrapped in leaves. From Asturias.

Queso de Cabra - goat cheese from Andalucia mountain.

Tronchon - from Aragon. A hard cheese with mild flavour.

Idiazábal - hard cheese made from milk from Lancha sheep and from the Basque County

Roncal - from Navarra, the cheeses of increasing strength after storage.

Mahon from Menorca. A hard cheese with mild taste