The Meat That Comes From Milk, The Health And Strength Value Of Cheese As A Main Dish In The Daily Diet

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The Health and Strength Value of Cheese as a Main Dish in the Daily Diet

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THE HEALTH AND STRENGTH VALUE OF CHEESE AS A MAIN DISH IN THE DAILY DIET

If you knew of a butcher-shop where only the best grade of meat was sold, and where all bone, gristle and surplus fat—all waste—were removed from the meat before it was weighed out to you, and where you paid for this wasteless food material no more than you now pay for bone, gristle, meat and surplus fat combined—well, you would know the millenium had arrived!

If the millenium depended only on such a state of affairs, it arrived at least a thousand years before Christ, and was ushered in by whoever it was that first made cheese.

The name of that great benefactor of the race is not known. But the meaning of his gift to mankind has grown clearer through the ages, and to-day it is accepted by most peoples as one of the foremost of sustaining food materials.

A food which more than fulfills the fancy of the first paragraph of this article, since it not only is a wasteless "meat," but far richer in actual fuel value than the edible part of the best cuts of beef.
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We measure food-fuel values in "calories"—heat units. The pound of whole milk cheese you bring home from the grocer's represents 1950 calories, while the edible portion of the best sirloin steak you buy at the butcher's represents only 1270 calories. In order to get a pound of that edible portion you must buy more than weight, for there is a considerable percentage of waste even in round steak. Yet the cheese is virtually wasteless.

A Match for Meat in Values

"But there is no waste at all to a loaf of baker's bread," you say, "yet it can't take the place of meat."

Just here we come to the most remarkable fact connected with cheese. And I am pleased to use quotation marks in stating it, because of the authority back of the assertion.

"So far as its composition is concerned, cheese is entitled to be considered as directly comparable with meat."

This is the official verdict of the United States Government. And while we are making use of Uncle Sam's expert knowledge on this subject, it is well to hear what he has to say about the digestibility of cheese.

"Of course, it takes a strong stomach to deal with cheese," you say—because wrong use of this food has supplied some ground for this wrong notion, which still prevails among a good many persons. Being a food of highly concentrated value, to eat even a small piece of cheese at the close of a heavy
dinner, or to make it the pièce de résistance of a midnight supper, naturally taxes the already busy department of the interior. The same amount of bacon, eaten in the same way at the same time, would have done the same thing.

As Digestible as All Staple Foods

To settle this matter of the digestibility of cheese, the United States Department of Agriculture carried on a series of nutritional experiments a few years ago, and the conclusion reached was thus set forth in an official bulletin:

"When eaten raw or carefully cooked, cheese is as thoroughly digested as other staple foods, and is not likely to produce physiological disturbance. The fact that cheese, like meat, contains neither starch nor cellulose, suggests that, like meat, it should be combined with bread, potatoes and other starchy foods, with vegetables and with sweets. The high percentage of fat in cheese suggests the use of correspondingly small amounts of fat in the accompanying dishes, while the soft texture of cheese dishes, as compared with meat, makes it reasonable to serve the harder and crustier breads with them. In order that the diet may remain well balanced, cheese, if used in quantity, should replace foods of similar composition rather than supplement them."

To this indisputable evidence let me add that digestion can also be promoted by grating it so as to give the gastric juices a chance to act upon the fat which surrounds the particles of casein like an envelope, thus preventing the gastric juices from coming readily in contact with the fat. One difficulty seems to be that cheese is frequently not chewed enough and the digestive organs have to cope with lumps of the material. Another factor in its digestibility is the temperature at which it is cooked. Like
all proteid foods it is toughened and hardened by a high temperature. We all know the stringy indigestible Welsh rarebit one gets from overcooking, and for the same reason, in combining cheese with macaroni, rice or honey, it is well not to allow the cheese to be at the bottom of the dish but to protect it from the high temperature, by putting it between layers of starchy material. Its digestion can also be promoted by the addition of a small amount of potash (old fashioned saleratus) or of baking soda, which makes the cheese soluble and therefore more digestible. Sometimes after cheese has become tough from the action of too high a temperature, it may be again made soft by these substances. When properly used and eaten there is no evidence that cheese is not as digestible as any other highly concentrated food.

The Virtues of Milk in Solid Form

The highest praise that can be given any food is to say it is like milk, for milk is the one complete nutrient. When it comes to cheese, we can go to the limit of such praise, for it is milk—all milk and nothing else! It therefore stands almost at the head of our list of foods.

It is milk with the 87 per cent of water found in whole milk reduced to about one-third that amount and with the invaluable food elements of the milk remaining in concentrated form.

Cheese is one-third casein—the most important protein of milk—and where made from whole milk, it contains all the fat of the white fluid without
which the human race could not exist. Cheese also is rich in the mineral salts of milk—lime and phosphorus—which are necessary to the proper maintenance of the body and which are most likely to be lacking in the diet of the average person.

It is the protein of meat that makes this particular form of food highly valuable to man—the protein and the flavor. But science has proved that the protein of milk is the best of all forms of this builder and repairer of body tissue, and in cheese we have this protein in compressed form—much in little. As to flavor—cheese speaks for itself.

*And Cheese Has Vitamines!*

As if Nature were bent on providing one solid food as perfect as milk is in its way, cheese has the added and highly valuable advantage of being a vitamine-bearing food.

Milk is known to be richer than any other food-stuff in these protective elements which are so necessary to physical growth and welfare, and where cheese is made of whole milk, it passes along to the ultimate consumer the fat-soluble vitamines of whole milk. The housewife who wants to know can always find out whether it is a skim milk or a whole milk cheese she is buying, for the law requires that the difference be marked on the label. But if she knows it is a cheese made in Wisconsin, which supplies half of the country’s output, that is enough—for the law of that state prohibits the manufacture of any but whole-milk cheese. The New York brand on full cream or cheddar cheese is also a guarantee
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that it is made of whole milk. Cheddar cheese can also be made from skim milk, but the label tells the story to the buyer who is interested in the quality purchased.

How and Where It Is Made

There are dozens of different kinds of cheese—different in shape, color, odor and texture—but all of the various members of this large food family may be traced to the same beginning—milk. Some few owe their existence to goat’s milk, but the majority claim direct descent from the cow.

Cheese is made by curdling whole or skimmed milk with rennet, separating the liquid whey from the semi-solid curd, and pressing the remaining solid. Then, with or without added flavoring of salt, sage or bread crumbs, the pressed shapes are “cured” in cellars, storehouses or caves, under varying degrees of temperature and for varying lengths of time. This, in brief, is the process followed in the manufacture of every kind of cheese.

The making of cheese requires the utmost care in every step from start to finish. The digestibility of cheese depends largely upon the perfection of its ripening and this in turn upon the materials, temperature, cleanliness, precision or strength of the ferment used and the skill with which the work is carried on. Cheese, like butter fat, readily absorbs any foreign odor or flavor, either of which may lessen its value. The degree of moisture and of temperature in which the cheeses are permitted to ripen has much to do with their characteristic flavor and
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texture. The flavor also depends on the varieties of bacteria and molds used during the ripening process, each species producing special changes which give characteristic flavors. The ripening process continues for weeks and in some cases for months, the flavor slowly growing stronger and the cheese more palatable as time progresses.

Cheese that is made from whole milk has, of course, a higher food-fuel value than that made from skimmed milk, yet one kind of skim-milk cheese—and one that can be easily made in any home—is so valuable as a food and so good that I propose to give it the place of honor in discussing the most popular varieties.

The Charm and Worth of Cottage Cheese

Even the name given to this form of cheese is attractive. And when one stops to think that it is quickly and easily made from skimmed milk which for many years has been largely wasted, its importance is magnified.

It is made by curdling the skimmed milk with a rennet tablet, then draining the whey from the curd through a piece of clean cheese-cloth and pressing or squeezing out all the moisture that may remain. The snowy mass which results may be salted to taste or enriched with a little cream or flavored and beautifully colored with ground pimentos—a valuable meat substitute.

Here is a food amazingly rich in body-building materials, tempting to both the eye and the palate, and capable of being served in many ways. And one
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which for economy is without parallel in the whole list of things we eat. If cottage cheese were made more carefully it would probably be more generally liked. Instead of the lumpy, flavorless stuff so often offered for sale it should be smooth and creamy in texture and mellow in flavor. To make such cheese the milk must be pure and clean, the temperature for souring must be carefully watched to prevent the formation of curd and the moisture must be carefully pressed out. Every home has occasionally left over milk, and every farm has quantities that could be used for this cheap and nutritious food if the art of making it were better understood.

"57" Kinds and How to Select Them

Of the making of cheeses, like the making of books, there would seem to be no end. There are two distinct classes, hard and soft, and under these come any number of variations.

The most popular soft cheeses are cottage, neufchatel, camembert, brie and English cream cheese. They are best when freshest and should be consumed soon after manufacture. The soft cheeses are believed to be more digestible than the hard, but this is due to the fact that few people masticate cheese thoroughly.

The hard cheeses most in favor are cheddar—so called from the fact that it was first made in Cheddar, England, though it is now made extensively in America, also—stilton, roquefort, gorgonzola, Swiss, limburger, pineapple and edam. Some of these, as brie and limburger, are notably odor-