

Cheese Experiences Across Cultures

Francesc Fusté-Forné (Ed.)



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Universitat
de Girona


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Cover image: A loaf of rye bread in Roquefort, France.

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places of consumption, markets, and other forms of experiences which happen in diverse places. As readers, you will travel through home kitchens, mountains or prisons, and you will engage in discussions about climate change, ethics or migration.

With contributors from 45 countries in North America, South America, Europe, Central Asia, East Asia, Middle East, Africa and Oceania, the book aims to offer a global and plural perspective on cheese, not only as a food product but as a key element in shaping the cultural identity of different individuals and societies, and the relationship between culture, nature and tourism through gastronomy. *Cheese Experiences Across Cultures* provides a perspective on cheese as an element that highlights territorial resources (both physical and human environments) and contributes to cultural exchange. This ethnographic and experiential perspective offers a broader understanding of how cheese acts as a vehicle for the exchange of knowledge, facilitating learning and interconnection between people and societies. The book also co-creates awareness of the role of cheese in the sustainable development of primary sector activities and their relationship with tourism, as well as the value of cultural and natural heritages and local traditions.

We invite you to enjoy this collective project *Cheese Experiences Across Cultures*, a free, open-access digital book promoted by the Social Council of the University of Girona on the occasion of Catalonia’s designation as the World Region of Gastronomy 2025.

Francesc Fusté-Forné
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Emotions shared
with the cows in the
Sicily region, Italy.

Photo: Grazia Cassarino.

Donatella Privitera | University of Catania (Italy)

Differently cheese: an experience for an inclusive society



Everything begins with a project called “Differently Abled and Inclusive Trekking”, where nature, walking, and agrotherapy become tools of inclusion, solidarity, and shared well-being. Amid the gentle hills of the Iblei, where the air smells of wild thyme and the clouds look like sheep on holiday, a group of special young people arrives at a small social dairy farm in Monterosso Almo (Ragusa, Italy). They are welcomed by Valentina and Palmira, their faces dusted with floury smiles and voices made for storytelling. Here, the skilled hands and expertise of the cheesemakers form the very soul of production. “Today we’ll all become cheesemakers!” they exclaim, leading the group into the barn, where curious cows and goats peek out of nowhere. The

younger pet the animals, observe and try the milking, and laugh when a sheep sneezes. In the dairy, each participant receives a little gift—an honorary badge for budding masters of taste. Their hands dive into the curd, and their eyes sparkle at the magic of milk turning into cheese. Between one explanation and the next, they taste warm *Ricotta*, fragrant *Caciocavallo Ragusano*, and aged *Pecorino Siciliano* with flavors of sun and stone. The afternoon ends beneath a carob tree, with music, storytelling, and a large wooden table overflowing with flavour. The younger write thoughts on postcards scented with basil: “Today I learned that cheese is made with heart”. And in the golden light of sunset, everything feels possible. Emotions given, and emotions received.

