



GORGONZOLA, ITALIAN PDO EXCELLENCE

GORGONZOLA MAKING

Our visit to the Latteria di Cameri, 19 and 26 April 2023

IPS Ravizza, classes 3ABeno

<https://latteriadicameri.it/uk/>

Students' report

Gorgonzola comes from an ancient tradition. It is a very popular cheese and it is present all over the world, it is produced in Italy only in 2 regions: Piedmont and Lombardy.

The main characteristics of the Gorgonzola cheese are its **green-blue veins**.

Gorgonzola was produced for the first time towards the end of the 9th century near Milan, made with the milk of tired cows, those that went down the mountains to the plain to find some rest, generating a milk particularly suitable for the production of soft cheeses.



Over the centuries, the production of Gorgonzola has expanded geographically covering a larger territory, so much so that Novara, a land rich in pastures, has become the new capital of Gorgonzola (with 60% of the production).





Gorgonzola has been recognized by the European Community as a Protected Designation of Origin (**PDO**) product.

We can distinguish two different types of Gorgonzola:

Gorgonzola dolce (sweet gorgonzola), i.e. soft, creamy and with a sweet taste, and **Gorgonzola piccante** (piquant, pungent gorgonzola), i.e. a cheese that is distinguished by a semi-hard consistency, and a stronger and more pungent flavour.

The maturation period varies: for the sweet gorgonzola ranges between 50 and 150 days while for the pungent one between 80 and 270.

At the Latteria di Cameri 90% of the milk goes for the gorgonzola, of which 88% of the edible part is used to make the sweet gorgonzola and 11-12% for the spicy one.

With the remaining milk at the Latteria they produce two other types of cheese: **taleggio** and **toma**.

Recently, a new type of Gorgonzola called **Gorgonzola al cucchiaino**, that is “by the spoon” (an extra creamy type), has become quite popular and the Latteria has added it to their line of production.

Apart from cow milk a small amount of goat milk is also collected and processed in order to produce the “**Verdalpe**”, a delicious blue-veined goat cheese.



Gorgonzola guarantees proteins of high biological quality, highly assimilable calcium and vitamins B1, B2, PP and A. It also contains good quantities of sodium, potassium and phosphorus. The amount of lipids present is 27%.

DID YOU KNOW THAT GORGONZOLA ...?...

has the certification **LFREE**

has a lactose content of < 0,002 g per 100 g



is rich in milk enzymes

is suitable for people with lactose intolerance



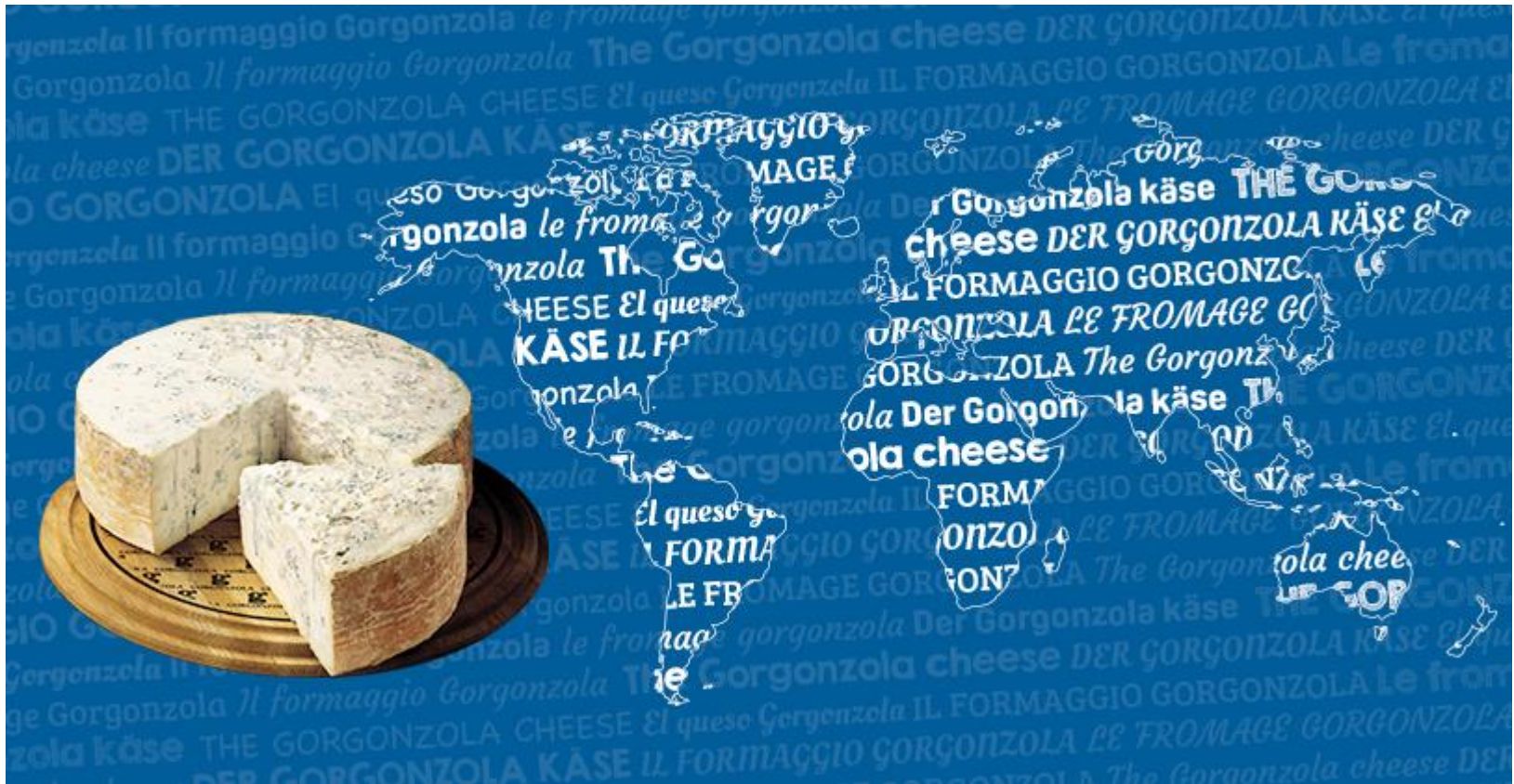
The milk collected at the farmers' stables is processed daily at the Dairy of Cameri. The most remarkable thing is that cheese making at the Latteria is **handmade** and the aging process takes place on fir **wood boards**.

The Dairy of Cameri was founded in 1914 thanks to the efforts of many small farmers who wished to independently process the milk they produced.

Today the Latteria has 15 member companies and processes around around 40 tons of milk per day. Just consider that in the past there were 500 farmers in the consortium!

Until 1960s the production of cheese took place in the centre of the small town of Cameri, then the Latteria was built along the road from Cameri to Novara, and it is in this factory that our visit took place.





The Latteria exports Gorgonzola all over the world. Japan is their biggest market and, as weird as it might seem, France comes second.

At the end of April we visited the dairy farm in Cameri and we must say that it was a wonderful experience. The dairy factory is situated in a serene location and the surroundings are breathtaking.

Upon entering the dairy farm, we were warmly greeted by the staff who were very friendly and knowledgeable. They took time to explain the different processes of cheese making and the various products they offer, giving us a thorough tour inside the dairy.



At the Dairy Sociale of Cameri the journey begins in the middle of the night, around 3 o'clock where the trucks arrive with the milk taken from the stables after the evening milking.

PASTEURIZATION

The milk, poured into the factory tanks, goes straight to the pasteurization plant where bacteria are killed at a temperature of 72°C, under the careful control of the cheesemaker.

Then the temperature is dropped to 32° for Gorgonzola dolce and 36 for Gorgonzola piccante.



A few hours later, between 4 and 5, all the other cheesemakers arrive and start making the gorgonzola.

The CAULDRONS contain up to 6 quintals of milk from which six wheels of blue cheese (about 12 kilograms each) will be obtained.



In the CAULDRON ROOM the cheesemakers add the **rennet**, **yeast** and **penicillium roqueforti** to the pasteurized milk in each cauldron, and they carefully control the **coagulation** and **curding** process, a combination of turning and resting, performed with the help of two tools – the **harp**, which is used to move the milk, and the **flags**, which are used to stop the circular movement of the milk.







After about 40-45 minutes it's time to scoop the curd onto a big DISPERSION OR POURING TABLE to facilitate the separation between curd and whey.

From the dispersion table the cheesemakers collect and put the curd into different MOULDS, which are then **pressed** and turned 4 times.



In all these phases, the cheesemakers take the utmost care to operate delicately to preserve the softness of the product, which is essential for obtaining a creamy gorgonzola.

With the last two turnings, the wheels are marked by placing on one of the two surfaces a stencil bearing the acronym CG (Consorzio Gorgonzola) and the **number 57**, which is the Latteria identification number.

After about eight hours from when the cheese-making began the gorgonzola wheels have been shaped and the next phases may begin.



Before proceeding with the maturing process, the gorgonzola cheeses are taken on trolleys to the REST ROOM or fresh food room where they remain for one night at 9°C to slow down the fermentation.

The freshly formed gorgonzola needs to rest a while before the finishing phase, the one that will give life to the excellent product.



The next stage takes place in the **SALTING ROOM** (22.5°C with 80% humidity), the so-called Camerino, this room is intended to purge the excess humidity.

Gorgonzola is **dry-salted** by manually rolling the wheels so that the salt is sprinkled evenly on the surface (about 250 grams of salt per wheel). The process is carried out twice, 24 hours apart.





The wheels are constantly checked by the seasoners, who occasionally test their consistency and humidity.

The check takes place by taking a part of the product with a **tryer**; also in this case it is man's experience that allows to evaluate when the product has reached the right degree of drying to be sent to the **maturing rooms**.

CHEESE DRILLING

In the first thirty days of rest, the gorgonzola wheels are subject to two DRILLINGS. The operation, now performed with a mechanical drilling machine, is necessary to allow the air to penetrate in every wheel so that the penicillium spores develop the distinctive blue veins.



The wheels are also BRUSHED and wet with water and salt.

Thanks to this operation and to the wood that allows the cheese to breathe, the typical microflora develops on the rind, giving it a pink color, and the maturation of the cheese proceeds.

TOMA cheese wetting and brushing performed by cheesemaker Alberto



AGING

Gorgonzola is aged on wooden boards at 4-5°C temperature and 90-95% humidity.

The goal is to avoid stress to the product which evolves and matures progressively in the same controlled environment.



After the first month the wheels begin to soften; they are turned over every week.

After a total of about 80 days for the sweet type and over 5 months for the pungent one the wheels are ready to be wrapped in paper and put on the market.



PACKAGING and WRAPPING is also handmade.



We finished the tour with a tasting of 4 cheeses:

- Gorgonzola dolce
- Gorgonzola piccante
- Toma
- Taleggio

Overall, our visit to the dairy farm in Cameri was a memorable experience. It was inspiring to see the care, attention and the quality of the dairy products. I would highly recommend a visit to this dairy farm to anyone who wants to learn more about cheese production.



STUDENTS' FEEDBACKS

I really enjoyed the visit because we saw new things and we were also able to taste their products.

In my opinion it was very interesting and nice to see new things never seen other than through the computer, to see how they still work in 2023, now the factories are full of machines that do everything on their own. With this visit to the dairy I definitely learned that behind that piece of cheese I eat there is a lot of processing and a lot of people have worked to make it.

For me this experience was truly unique and educational in seeing how passionately the cheesemakers proceed with the various processes, with immense sacrifices and following the traditions to create really good cheeses. I received a lot of information down to the smallest detail, so much so that at a certain point I wanted to carry out all the processing as the cheese makers did.

It was a nice experience, I liked it but the most beautiful part was the tasting, and if there had been a nice glass of red wine it would have been perfect!

Before returning to school I popped in their shop and bought some cheese to bring home. I recommend this visit. I would to it again.