



Is Cheese the New Kale?

Scientific studies reveal a multitude of health benefits from cheese.

BY SUSAN SHERIDAN

Cheese is one of the most cherished foods on earth, but for many it is a guilty pleasure. (Fattening! Unhealthy!) However, the scientific evidence tells a very different story. Studies reveal that cheese has a multitude of health benefits, including protecting against cavities and cancer. Perhaps the best news for many of us is that cheese and other dairy products definitely have a place in weight loss diets as weight loss tools.

preventing tooth decay, tastefully

In a recent study conducted by the Academy of General Dentistry and published in the May/June 2013 issue of *General Dentistry*, cheese significantly outperformed both milk and sugar-free yogurt in cavity-protective effects. Investigators

divided 68 participants into three groups; the first group ate cheddar cheese, the second sugar-free yogurt, and the third drank milk. Each group consumed their assigned dairy product for three minutes and then orally rinsed with water. Participants' dental plaque pH levels were measured before food was taken and then again at 10 minutes, 20 minutes and 30 minutes after ingestion. Investigators sought to determine if dairy promotes higher pH levels in the mouth, which correlates with a lower risk of cavities.

The milk group and the yogurt group showed no changes in their pH levels after eating, but the cheese group did. Rapid pH increases occurred at all three time intervals, indicating that cheese had definite, measurable anti-cavity effects that remain active at least 30 minutes after consumption. The researchers

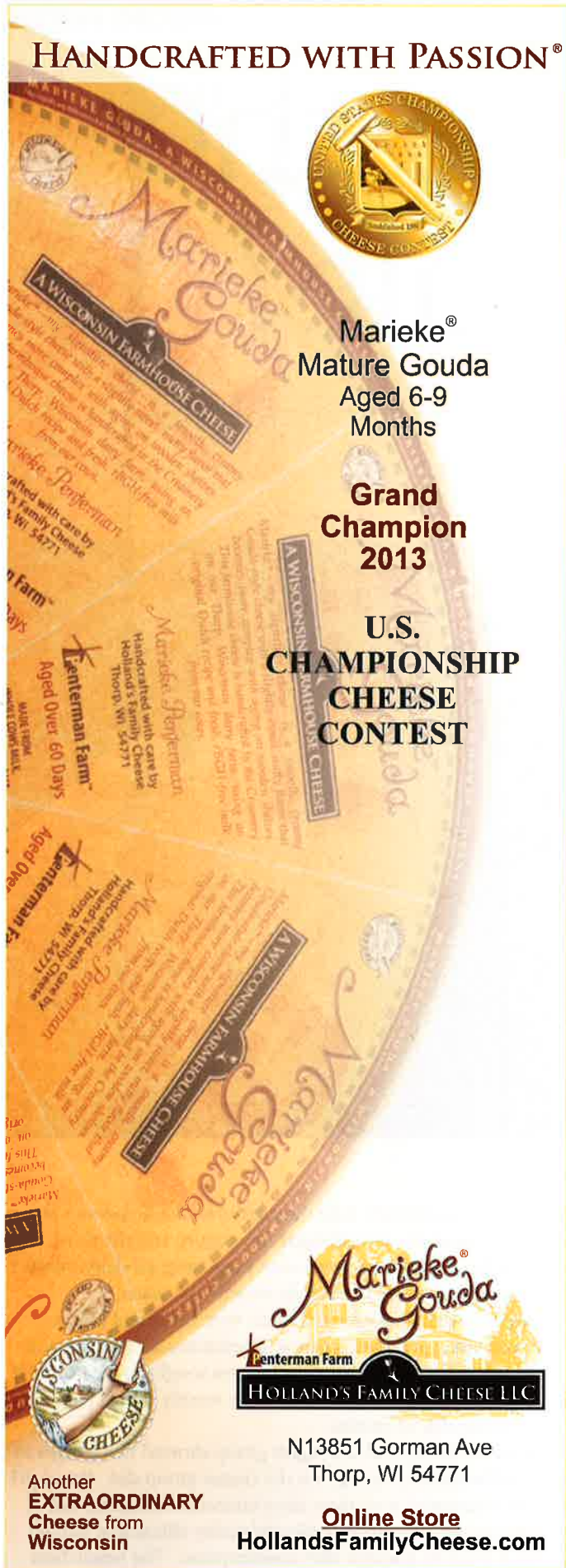
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commented that the rising pH levels in the cheese group may be due to increased saliva production that occurs naturally with chewing. They also suggest that cheese's outstanding performance in the study may have to do with the ability of various compounds in cheese to bind directly to tooth enamel, thereby creating a further defense barrier against enamel-destroying acidity.

**cheese and cancer prevention:
it's the vitamin K2**

Cheese should be on everyone's list of cancer-fighting foods, right along with broccoli and kale, according to Dr. William Li, president and medical director of the Angiogenesis Foundation. Angiogenesis is the process of blood vessel formation and growth in the body. What does cheese have to do with angiogenesis and why is it on Dr. Li's favorite foods list?

It's because cheese contains Vitamin K2, which has been shown to suppress blood vessel growth (or angiogenesis) in tumors. In effect, Vitamin K2 starves tumors of their blood supply, thereby hastening tumor death. In a major European dietary study, by (The European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition or (EPIC), those subjects who consumed the most cheese (at least 41 grams or about one and one-half

ounces) each day were found to have a significantly reduced risk of dying from cancer during the study when compared with those who consumed the least amount of cheese (less than 14 grams or one-half ounce) each day.

In addition, higher Vitamin K2 consumption from cheese has also been associated with significantly lower risks of lung cancer and prostate cancer. Cheeses from northern Europe, specifically Swiss, Emmental, Dutch Gouda and Jarlsberg, are particularly rich in Vitamin K2. A veritable workhorse of a vitamin, Vitamin K2 also promotes cardiovascular health and protects against osteoporosis.

for dieters: more cheese, more weight loss?

Although the high fat content in dairy products has historically been linked them to weight gain in the public's mind and among nutritionists, there is now cumulative evidence to challenge that perception. After a review of observational evidence, clinical trials, and in-vitro studies, Marta Van Loan of the USDA Agriculture Research Service at the University of California



concluded in the Journal of the American College of Nutrition that "the preponderance of scientific evidence supports the beneficial role of dairy foods in weight management." And she added that most studies indicate an inverse relationship between dairy and body weight.

One study showing that "more dairy is better" was conducted at the Curtin

University School of Public Health in Australia, where overweight subjects who consumed five servings of dairy a day lost more weight than those consuming three servings a day. All participants were on low-calorie diets. At the end of 12 weeks, the five-servings-a-day participants experienced not only higher mean levels of weight loss, but higher mean levels of fat mass loss, and—some really good news—a greater total percentage of abdominal fat loss.

Here, at last, is scientific corroboration of those maddening (at least maddening to Americans) "French Paradox" statistics showing that, despite a per capita cheese consumption of 57 lbs., only 11 percent of the adult French population is considered obese. This compares to 33 lb. per capita cheese consumption in the U.S. where 34 percent (fully one-third) of Americans are considered obese.

Finally, there's the commonsense notion shared by all weight loss experts—and by anyone who has ever tried to lose weight—that satiety is key to successful dieting. And full-fat cheese, which contains protein and fat, is very satiating. As a result, eating full-fat cheese while dieting can mean less hunger between meals, and may even contribute to smaller portions at mealtimes.

So, is cheese the new kale? Not quite.

But for all the above reasons, and many more, we can now smile even more broadly when we "say cheese". CC

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