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Media text

Emmentaler AOP – The king of Swiss cheeses

It is well known far beyond the borders of Switzerland - the cheese with the large holes. Abroad, Emmental cheese is often simply called “Swiss cheese”. This celebrated cheese takes its name from the valley (“Tal”) of the river Emme in the Bern Region, an appealing hilly landscape with inhabitants who are dedicated to preserving their customs and traditions. The production of the famous Emmental cheese, often referred to as Emmentaler, can actually be traced back to the 13th century. Emmentaler AOP is made from fresh untreated milk from cows fed on grass and hay but not silage. It takes about 12 litres of milk to make one kilo of cheese. The use of any additives is prohibited, as is the use of genetically modified ingredients.

The characteristic holes

The cheese wheels have a diameter of 80 to 100 cm (32 to 40 inches), and weigh between 75 and 100 kg (165 and 220 pounds). Tradition and outstanding quality have resulted in Emmentaler AOP being acknowledged as the undisputed “King of cheese” throughout the world. The holes readily distinguish Emmentaler AOP from all other cheeses. The holes appear during the fermentation process, and vary in size from that of a cherry to that of a walnut.

The all-important dairy mark of authenticity

The characteristic flavour of a young Emmentaler AOP, aged for at least four months, is mild with hints of hazelnut. When fully aged after 12 months or more, it is strong to full-flavoured. Every authentic Emmentaler AOP has the Emmentaler AOP mark as well as the reference number of the cheese dairy stamped on the side of the wheel. The AOP label (protected designation of origin) is a guarantee of quality as well as origin.

Watch cheese being made at the dairy

At the show-dairy in Affoltern in the Emmental, there are several opportunities every day for visitors to watch how Emmentaler AOP is made, and even to make their own cheese. An audiovisual presentation explains the process in German, French, English, Italian and Spanish. With so much to see, this family-friendly attraction is popular with visitors of all ages and nationalities. The restaurant with its panoramic terrace serves hearty cheese specialities as well as regional dishes. The picturesque surroundings also offer a glorious backdrop for a great variety of walks and other excursions.

The Emmental Cheese Route

The Emmental Cheese Route is an app-based themed route leading past various points of interest while revealing a wealth of knowledge about the centuries-old tradition of cheese making. The Cheese Route is offered as a short tour of 35 km or a longer tour of 78 km, and a FLYER e-bike makes it easy to cover either route in a single day. A map provides constant orientation from the current position; and with the help of the GPS feature on a smartphone, none of the route's 11 or 21 sights will be missed. Children do have the chance to get a detective-diploma when answering the questions of the detective-cow Emma.

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