



Italians

Guide to more than 400
Italian Cheese
(and many foreign cheeses).

compiled by the architect Marco Parenti



Italians. For Italian Cheeses. And not just cheese...

From a letter by the architect Marco Parenti

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Dear Andrea,

You have asked me to design and illustrate the characteristics of knives for Italian cheeses because you want to create a line called “Italians”. What a great idea! It is no surprise that the best carvers, who gratified and delighted the Renaissance Courts with their art of carving, were Italians.

However be careful, because if we prepare a set of knives for Italian cheeses, we must make knives for every type of cheese on earth!

Yes, because our cheeses are unique and many, as our friends on the other side of the Alps say. We have more than four hundred types of cheese, each one different in consistency, flavour and

preparation. The French, on the other hand, pass off different varieties because they change the shape or refine the taste with various sauces but there are really very few cheeses that are truly different.

The idea is to keep in mind the principal differences in cheeses but also the needs of consumers, gourmets or epicurean connoisseurs who enjoy the pleasure of savouring the finer things in life, in food.

I am sending you some of my thoughts, take a look and let me know. In the meantime, I wish to send you my most savoury and cheese-like regards!

Architetto Marco Parenti



why it is necessary to cut cheese well

Introduction by Andrea Berti



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There has never been doubt that a perfect cut is an indispensable prerequisite in order to fully enjoy any course of food.

Imagine how important this must be for one like myself, who was born and raised in a family that has passed down the art of knife making for one hundred years.

The idea that cutting cheese could become the object of such passion, as demonstrated by Marco Parenti, has surprised and even moved me.

When one discovers someone e-

xists and feels the necessity to write a book dedicated to the art of cheese cutting, means that the efforts involved in the attempt to perpetuate the tradition of Italian knife making are fully justified and increasing all the time.

It is not only for aesthetic



reasons or good taste, but good manners require the appropriate cut for cheeses. As in the case of meats, which require smooth cutting with a non-serrated sharpened knife, in order not to lose the juices and fluids which are conserved in the meat, cheese must also be cut according to the proper criteria, in order to savour fully its taste.

The answer is clear and simple although not widely known. Most cheeses present variations in flavour according to the part of the cheese tasted. In other words, the

taste of a cheese is different in the center with respect to the taste in other parts of the cheese, particularly near the crust.

Therefore if one wants to savour the entire range of tastes in a cheese, it should be cut only when fully aware of the organoleptic gradations in the various parts.

In order to do this, specific instruments are required: knives that tradition has perfected over the course of time; shaping them in function of the consistency of dairy cheese and the sizes and

shapes of the innumerable cheeses, which have always been produced in Italy.

This is why and how this set of knives was produced: to allow for a perfect cut of our cheeses, a tribute to a hum-

ble and noble food, simple yet rich.

Andrea Berti

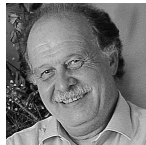
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cutting cheese

The architect Marco Parenti reveals the secrets

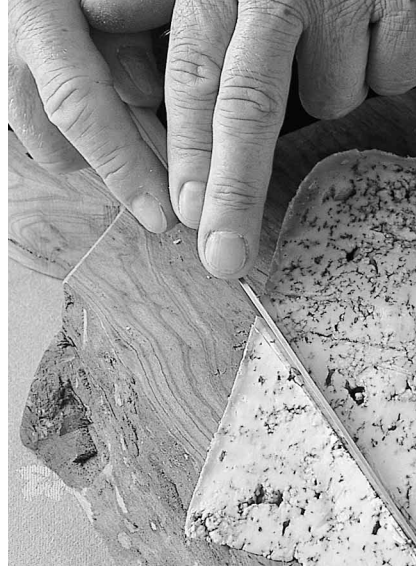


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Properly cutting a cheese means distributing the same properties, aromas, scents and consistencies to each cut of cheese, liberating all the wonders that this nectar can bestow, making our taste buds come alive! One must know the cheese well, since not all cheeses have the same shape and not all cheeses have a uniform taste.

There are dairy cheeses with thick non-edible crusts, others have only thin veils of penicilliums which develop during maturation.



The external part of the cheese can be eaten with the body of the cheese itself as observed by the connoisseur Pierre Androuet.

Furthermore, there are cheeses which are tastier near the crust due to maturation and some connoisseurs prefer this part of the cheese to that of the center. This is why every cheese and shape of cheese needs a specific method of cutting.

The starting point for choosing the correct type of cut is the shape of the cheese itself. When working on segments or

slices of dairy cheese, notions of geometry are no longer necessary. It is better to address the simpler discussion of proportion, bearing in mind the type of cheese which must be cut, to enhance the taste.

In fact I have noted that the parts near the crust in fontina, tome stravecchie and panerone cheeses are rather tasty.

To deprive a guest of such a pleasure in



order to serve equal portions of the crust and central part is not really in good taste. Therefore it is necessary to take into consideration the different taste sensations of the cheese in order to obtain the correct cut.

Cheeses are enhanced more when cut correctly according to the type of cheese.

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the cut and the texture of cheese

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The cut is the clean separation of the body of a cheese, without chipping or tearing of the walls. This occurs when the resistance of the cheese is minute with respect to the cutting force. The blade needs to be thin enough so as not to create cracking or separation due to compression.

Depending on the consistency of the dairy cheese, a particular blade is necessary. Furthermore, due to the fact that fibers of cheese are different to those of meat, they do not create a resistance causing



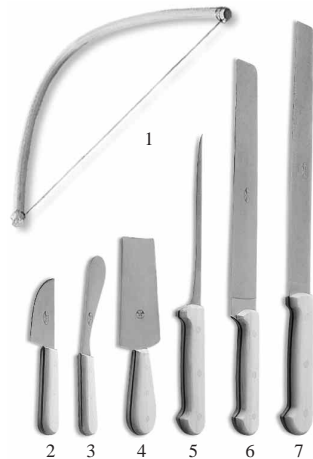
“friction”, which happens when cutting a slice of meat or salami.

Cutting cheese means only one cut, from top to bottom.

*every
cheese
has its own knife*

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Each cheese requires a precise cutting ritual. Shape, consistency and size determine specific cutting requirements for each type of cheese and therefore the type of instrument to be used. The following is a list of our specialized cheese knives.

1. the bow
2. the compact
3. the spatula
4. the trapezium
5. the soft cheese
6. the hard cheese
7. the semi-hard cheese

the hard-cheese knife

Which cheese to cut with this knife: matured asiago, hard bra, bitto, provolone, torna stravecchio, montasio, calcagno and all cheeses with similar characteristics. **How to use this knife:** cutting hard cheeses necessitates a certain force

in order to overcome the resistance due to the consistency of the cheese. A suitable knife must have a thin blade but it must be wide and strong enough to support the force of the cut and cleanly separate the cheese. The force must be concen-

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trated on the handle and only in cases of extreme resistance should the other hand be used, by pressing on the back of the blade. Pay attention! In order to avoid a fraying of the cheese, the cut must be clean and precise without any sliding movement. The knife must penetrate the cheese perpendicular to the resting plane and must cut from top to bottom with a uniform pressure. The cut must be well balanced and the knife must penetrate perfectly horizontal, to avoid breaking the cheese at the end of the cut.



the semi-hard cheese knife

Which cheese to cut with this knife: fontina, raschera, fresh torna, Swiss cheese, young asia-go, Sicilian canistrato and all similar cheeses. **How to use this knife:** the semi-hard consistency of the dairy cheese requires a light, easy to handle knife,

shaped to cut without causing chipping or tearing of the cheese, which occurs when the blade is too wide and thick.

The blade must also be able to cut the crust which is generally more consistent than the internal part of the cheese. This is why

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the knife is lightly curved in the center, almost like a wedge.

This knife can be transformed into a type of saw with a short oblique movement when the crust is very resistant.

This allows the cutter to use a uniform pressure to avoid any chipping of the underlying parts. The pressure applied must be modest and perpendicular to the resting plane, to avoid any inopportune flexion.



the soft cheese knife

Which cheese to cut with this knife: gorgonzola, mozzarella, robiole, the quartiolo cheeses of the Val Camonica, murianengo, panerone and all similar types of cheese. **How to use this knife:** the blade for soft cheeses must cut cleanly without sticking, thus

causing no chipping or cracking. The cutter must cut decisively with an initial movement inclined towards the resting plane, creating a fulcrum on the end of the knife, moving the rest of the blade perpendicular to the resting plane, in a rotating or circular sense.



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When a cheese is extremely soft, one wishes to avoid it sticking to the blade, thus horribly disfiguring the cheese. I will let you in on a little secret: moisten the blade with damp cloth. This reduces friction and facilitates the sliding of the blade on a soft cheese.



the compact knife

Which cheese to cut with this knife: this knife is generally used for cheeses which are very deep and round in form for example parmigiano, mature pecorino, fiore sardo, Sicilian canestrato, mature castelmagno, gavoio and other

cheeses of the same characteristics. **How to use this knife:** this knife could substitute excellently those knives with wedged, hooked or clawed blades, generally used for cutting and opening hard compact, grainy or chalky textu-



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res. The point needs to be placed uniformly and strongly onto the crust, pressing down on the blade the cheese falls away easily.



the trapezium knife

Which cheese to cut with this knife: Swiss cheese, provolone, canestrato from Puglia, fossa cheese from Sogliano soft pecorino and other types of hard and semi-hard cheese with the

same characteristics. **How to use this knife:** this substitutes bell, spade and horn shaped knives and is used for Swiss cheese. It cuts hard and semi-hard cheeses, relatively high and large in



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diameter. It is also used to cut pieces with solid forms. The pressure applied by the cutter is concentrated on the handle and in a vertical direction in respect to the resting plane. This will cleanly cut the cheese, perfectly perpendicular to the crust according to Monsieur Jean Francois Guillontin.

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the spatula knife

Which cheese to cut with this knife: all cheeses soft enough to spread. **How to use this knife:** The spatula with a steel blade, although less refined than those antique knives with a bone or ivory blade, is softer and more

flexible and functions better when spreading very soft dairy cheeses. It is thin enough cut any type of cheese without chipping eventhough it doesn't have a distinct cutting edge.



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the bow knife

Which cheese to cut with this knife: stracchino, robiola, soft taleggio, bossolasco, fresh goat cheeses, crescenza, Roman ricotta, piacentina, seiras, fresh tomini e primo sale and all types of cheese with similar characteristics. **How to use this knife:** not very long ago, in the poorer farm kitchens of southern Italy, polenta was the main meal. A piece of string, hemp or intestine,

was fixed to two small wooden pegs, and it was generally used to cut a slice. This tool was also used during big feasts to cut butter, fresh tometta or sieras



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cheese to add more flavour to a modest dish. Sometimes, instead of using a simple string, a more sophisticated device was invented by some shepard. It was a bow formed by using flexible wood (willow, hazel, plum or rush), held taut by a string, it allowed a more sophisticated type of cut, adding a certain style to a humble meal. I had the idea of proposing this in its original form (unknown to many) to pay homage to farming traditions. It is widely used by many people who are convinced that cutting a

fresh tometta or a still hot ricotta with this simple but ingenious device, other than being an ancient and almost sacrificial ritual, it induces the maître coupeur to take more care: more flavour is emanated and one can savour its fragrances to the full.





1895
David Berti

A long history
of steel, fire,
and skilled hands.



1995
Andrea Berti

The Berti family: knife-makers in Scarperia since 1895



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