

GUIDE TO CALIFORNIA HISPANIC-STYLE CHEESES



Look for the Seals
California Milk Advisory Board

Did You Know?

- California is the country's leading producer of Hispanic-style cheeses.
- California produces more than 25 varieties and styles of Hispanic-style cheeses bearing the Real California Cheese seal, which certifies they are natural cheeses made in California exclusively from California milk.
- Hispanic-style cheeses fall into two general categories – fresh and aged.
- Due to the growing popularity of Hispanic-style cheeses, many varieties are available in supermarkets across the country.

THE FRESH CHEESES:

Fresh, or unripened, cheeses are very young cheeses that have not been allowed to age. Typically, the fresh Hispanic-style cheeses are soft and moist, white or off-white in color and feature the delicious flavor of fresh milk. They have a shorter shelf life than aged cheeses and carry a freshness date on the package. A special characteristic of many of the fresh types is that they hold their shape during cooking. When heated, typically they soften but do not melt (or flow). Following are descriptions of several popular fresh Hispanic-style cheeses, or queso (Keh-so), widely available in California:

Oaxaca	Mild	White	Semi-firm	Hispanic-style cheese similar to Mozzarella but with distinctive braided appearance. Use as is, in sandwiches, or melted on cooked foods, including pizza and nachos.
Panela	Mild	White	Firm, moist	Hispanic-style cheese with flavor similar to a dry pressed Ricotta. Softens but does not melt when heated. Use in sandwiches, salads, with fruit and in cooked foods.
Queso Blanco Fresco (Queso Para Frier) & Queso Fresco	Mild	White	Soft/moist/firm	Most commonly used Hispanic-style cheese with a texture that softens but does not melt when heated. Use as a topping or filling in cooked dishes. Also great crumbled onto fruit, beans, salads and other dishes. Commonly referred to as Queso Para Frier when sold as a frying cheese.
Requeson	Very mild, semisweet	White	Soft, moist, grainy	Hispanic version of Ricotta that is used in salads, dips, cooked foods and desserts.



THE AGED CHEESES:

California cheesemakers produce a number of aged, semi-firm and firm Hispanic-style cheeses. A few of these will soften but not melt (or flow) when heated or used in cooked dishes. Others are excellent melting cheeses noted for the rich, creamy taste and texture they add to cooked foods. The aged cheeses can be stored in the refrigerator much longer than the fresh varieties. You should handle and store them much like Jack or Cheddar, or like Dry Jack in the case of the very dry types.

There is a style of Hispanic cheese commonly called “añejo” (or “aged”) that is different from its “aged” European and American counterparts. While the cheeses in this category are aged to some degree, their characteristic dry texture and pungent, sharp flavor comes from being salted, pressed and dried rather than being “aged” for a long time. Following are some popular aged cheeses that are widely available in California:

Asadero	Mild	White	Firm	Hispanic-style cheese similar to Provolone in its slightly tangy taste and firm texture. Made with whole or low-fat milk, it melts well and is used in such dishes as quesadillas and nachos as well as hamburgers and sandwiches.
Cotija (Queso Anejo)	Strong, aged flavor	White	Hard, dry, crumbly	Hispanic-style cheese typically shredded onto cooked foods, also in salads and with fruit.
Cotija	Salty, pungent	White	Semi-firm to firm, crumbly	Hispanic-style cheese similar to Feta. Crumble and sprinkle over cooked dishes, soups, beans and salads. Also called Queso Anejo (aged cheese). Some types may be very dry and hard.
Enchilado	Aged, slightly spicy coating	Red spice coating, white interior	Firm, dry, crumbly	Slightly aged Hispanic-style cheese with mild red chili or paprika coating. When aged longer (Anejo-style) may be quite hard. Heated, it softens but does not melt. Crumble onto Mexican foods, soups and salads.
Enchilado Anejo	Mild, lightly spicy	Red coating, white interior	Hard, dry, crumbly	Aged version (Anejo) of Enchilado. Good as a topping crumbled onto cooked foods. Softens but does not melt under heat.
Menonita	Mild	White	Smooth, semi-firm	Hispanic-style cheese similar in taste and uses to Gruyere or Gouda.
Manchego	Mellow, nutty	White	Semi-firm to firm	This California interpretation of a traditional Spanish cheese uses cows' milk to create a tasty table cheese. Eaten as is or in sandwiches. Melts well when used for cooking.

Note: The names given here are the most common names for these cheeses. However, it is not uncommon for a Hispanic-style cheese to be called by more than one name. Also, some cheesemakers may sell a cheese under a proprietary name that is different from that commonly used. In most cases the names given here will be on the package.

For more information about California Hispanic dairy products, visit www.RealCaliforniaMilk.com, like Real California Milk at [Facebook.com/RealCaliforniaMilk](https://www.facebook.com/RealCaliforniaMilk), follow at [Twitter.com/RealCalifMilk](https://twitter.com/RealCalifMilk), pin at [Pinterest.com/RealCalifMilk](https://www.pinterest.com/RealCalifMilk) and follow on Instagram @RealCalifMilk

