



Chapter 17

The Place and Importance of Cheese in Türkiye

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ABSTRACT

When we examine the origin of cheese, we see that it is almost as old as the history of milk. Although cheese is a product that is important to Turkish cuisine, it is also frequently used by world cuisines. It is thought that it spread to Turkish communities and the world with an adventure that started in Mesopotamia. Many types of cheese can be found in Anatolian lands. Many of these cheeses are produced and consumed with local culture and techniques. Türkiye's rich cheese diversity is a topic that should be introduced to the whole world. In this regard, cheese producers and tourism stakeholders have a great responsibility. Necessary efforts should be made to deliver cheeses that cannot exceed regional borders, first to the whole country and then to the whole world.

INTRODUCTION

All kinds of material and spiritual values that take shape as a result of the processes that societies have experienced throughout history and ensure transfer between generations are called culture (Karaca, 2016). Traditional foods, which vary according to lifestyle and economic conditions, are of great importance in revealing the cultural richness of a country (Albayrak & Güneş, 2010). Traditional foods produced from raw materials that have not been spoiled for centuries, or a composition that has preserved its traditional structure, or natural foods made with a traditional production method, appear as products that have been tested and approved by the public (Ötleş et al., 2016). When considered with its geographical location

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and natural resources, Türkiye; In addition to its historical and cultural heritage, it is considered a country very rich in terms of traditional food (Saygılı et al., 2020).

Communities have been introduced to milk, which has been known and accepted as a basic food, since the moment they were born, and have made it a part of their lives. Expressing the bond between mother and baby, milk has also become an indispensable product with its high level of nutrition. When we look at milk and milk-based foods, which form an important part of daily nutrition from birth to adulthood, the ability to preserve and consume cheese for a long time leads to an increase in cheese diversity. Cheese, which is one of the first indicators of communities taking a step towards civilization, is also one of the first signs of cultural richness and production. Since traditional foods and products produced in accordance with tradition will ensure the transfer of heritage of civilizations, they should be transferred between generations without damaging their original structures (Ekinci, 2014).

Traditional foods are a combination of tradition, history and cultural heritage; They are food products that have unique qualities and contain traditional raw materials and ingredients during the production phase. Traditional and local products appear as products that need to be promoted because they have an important place in the fields of culture and gastronomy. (Şener et al., 2010). Milk, which forms the raw material of cheese, has been an important food source since the existence of humanity. Milk, which is rich in protein, has a very high biological value. (Unal et al., 2008). When considered in terms of history, the agricultural revolution, or more commonly known as the Neolithic age, that occurred in the ten thousand years BC, provided the foundations for creating a settled order for humans and provided an environment suitable for the domestication of animals. The first animals thought to have been domesticated were sheep and goats, and information has been obtained that they were domesticated around Asia and the Middle East between 7000 and 8000 BC. In this way, the local people had the opportunity to use and consume the milk they obtained from sheep and goats. Although it is not certain, it is thought that the first cheese production was produced around 8000 BC around a valley known as Mesopotamia or Indus. However, it is not fully known by whom, where and for what purpose the cheese is produced (Kamber, 2006). There has been a continuous increase in the production and consumption of cheese, which has a high nutritional value in terms of content, over the centuries. Countries such as Switzerland, Canada, the USA and Australia have high consumption of cheese, which has been on the table for more than thousands of years. When per capita consumption rates are examined, it is concluded that Switzerland leads with 21.8 kg and Türkiye follows this figure with 7.8 kg (Terin et al., 2015).

History of Cheese and Its Place in Turkish Communities

Since the beginning of humanity, milk has been used in different ways due to its high nutritional content. Milk and milk-derived products are important nutritional sources for maintaining a balanced and correct diet and living a healthy life. Along with cheese, some dairy products such as yoghurt, ayran, cream and butter are also included in this important food sources category (Özkan, 2002; Maxhuni et al., 2010). When we look at the production methods and types of cheese, there are many types of cheese with different tastes and appearances around the world. While cheese was used as a way to preserve milk in ancient times, today it not only stands out with its nutrition but has become an extremely important product for the kitchen. It is thought that there are approximately 1000 types of cheese in the world, and as a result of research, around 500 types of cheese can be identified. It is believed that cheese evolved 8,000 years ago in a region called the Fertile Crescent, located between the Tigris and Euphrates. While the agricultural revolution took place with the domestication of plants and animals, soon after people

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