



PARMIGIANO REGGIANO

GUIDELINES FOR RETAIL OUTLETS AND CATERING

Third edition - April 2026

parmigianoreggiano.com

GUIDELINES FOR RETAILERS AND CATERING STAFF¹

These guidelines, drawn up by the Consorzio del Formaggio Parmigiano-Reggiano, have the purpose of giving some brief and useful information about Parmigiano Reggiano cheese, its characteristics and procedures at the point of sale.

The point of sale staff shall therefore be able to give consumers correct answers and suitable product information.

For additional information, please refer to the website:
parmigianoreggiano.com

¹The present guidelines should not be deemed to constitute a legally binding interpretation of the relevant legislation. Indeed, such an interpretation falls solely within the power/competence of the Courts. The responsibility of the compliance with the relevant legislation is of any operator. These guidelines may be amended.

PARMIGIANO REGGIANO CHEESE

Parmigiano Reggiano is a hard cheese, obtained from cooked and slowly matured paste, made from raw cow's milk, partially skimmed, produced by cows whose feed consists mainly of forage from the area of origin.

AREA OF ORIGIN: the milk and the cheese are produced in Italy in the defined geographical area which comprises the territory of the Provinces of **Parma, Reggio Emilia, Modena, Mantua (on the right bank of the Po river) and Bologna (on the left bank of the Reno river)**, in compliance with strict standards.

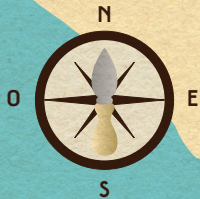
Since 1996 the name Parmigiano Reggiano has been recognized in the European Union as a PDO (Protected Designation of Origin):



EU PDO symbol

PARMIGIANO REGGIANO

Area of origin



Parmigiano Reggiano is made in compliance with a strict specification that provides for, among others, the following standards:

1

Dairy cows fed mainly with forage from the area of origin (Silage is forbidden).

2

Milk, cheese making process, and minimum aging (12 months) in the area of origin.

3

Always only 3 ingredients: milk, salt and calf rennet.

4

100% of the wheels checked by the Consorzio.

PARMIGIANO REGGIANO IN FIGURES:

Less than **3,000** milk producers

About **300** dairies

More than **4,000,000** wheels produced/year

520 liters (137.6 gal) of milk to make one wheel

40.5 kg (89.28 lb.) average weight of a wheel.



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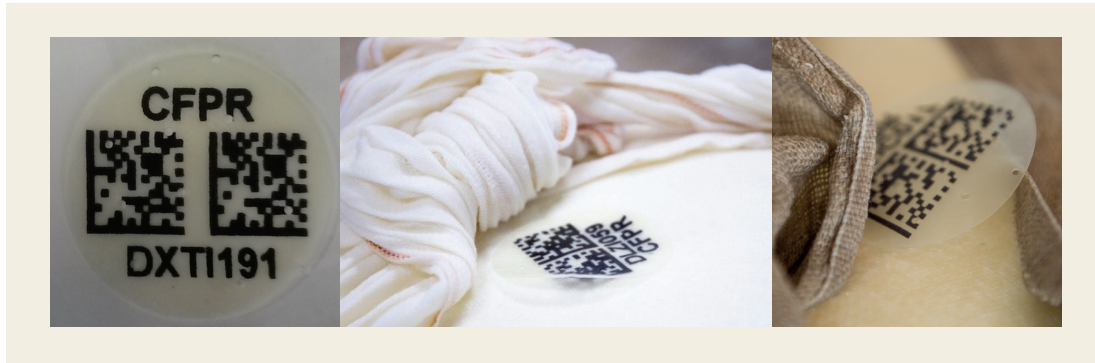


WHEEL OF PARMIGIANO REGGIANO CHEESE

How can we recognize it?

On every wheel of Parmigiano Reggiano the following identification elements are present:

CASEIN PLATE that shows: alphanumeric code for full product traceability that identifies every single wheel; it is usually placed on the flat face of the wheel from birth.



Do you want to know who and when the wheel was made?

Insert the alphanumeric code in the field “Search by casein plate number”
(<https://www.parmigianoreggiano.com/dairies-find-dairy>) and find out
which dairy produced that specific wheel and the birthday.

INFORMATION

BOOK A VISIT

LATTERIA SOCIALE LA MODERNA

FRAZ. FRESCAROLO, 3 Bussato, PR

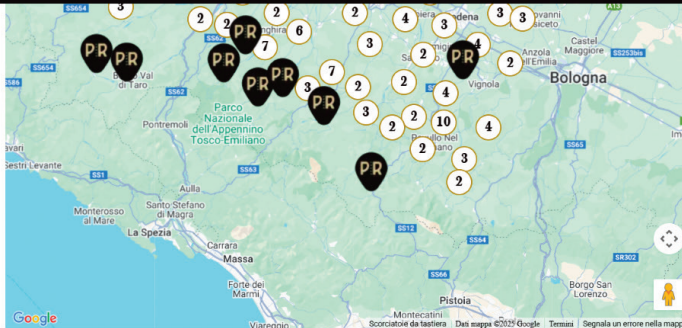
INFORMATION

FERRARI GIOVANNI IND. CASEARIA

LOC. BORIO, 1 Bedonia, PR

INFORMATION

LATTERIA SALSESE



Search by casein plate number i

Insert code

SEARCH



ALL THE FOLLOWING MARKS:

Remember: starting from January 2016 each wheel features production month and year, as well as dairy numeric code 3 times.

The pin dot wording Parmigiano Reggiano placed on the side rind of each wheel.



The numeric code identifying the dairy: find out about the dairy that produced the wheel on:

<https://www.parmigianoreggiano.com/dairies-find-dairy>



Oval selection mark “Consorzio Tutela Parmigiano Reggiano” and the production year: all the wheels are carefully examined by Consorzio experts each year and only those that pass a detailed inspection with the traditional cheese “hammer” at 12 months, are given this symbol.

Month (in Italian language)/year of production proving how old the cheese is!

The approval number of the establishment is provided for by EU legislation laying down specific hygiene rules for food of animal origin.



If a wheel is marked with parallel grooves around the side rind, it means that this wheel has been classified as **“Mezzano” Parmigiano Reggiano**, i.e. a Parmigiano Reggiano second category/“medium grade” cheese that should be eaten young.

On the wheels classified as third category, consisting of the wheels characterized by the presence of a number of serious defects the marks of origin around the side rind are removed: **these wheels can't be named Parmigiano Reggiano.**



Voluntary selection marks

What does the “Export” mark mean?

If the oval mark “Parmigiano Reggiano Export” is affixed on the cheese, it means that this wheel has been quality checked by the Consorzio experts at 18 months of aging and it is classified as “first grade”, namely without defects.



What does the “Premium” mark mean?

If the mark “Parmigiano Reggiano Premium” is affixed on the cheese, it means that this wheel has been quality checked by the Consorzio experts at 24 months of aging, it is classified as “first grade”, namely without defects, and has been deemed suitable according to a sensory analysis score.

What does the “Prodotto di montagna” mark mean?

If this fire brand is on the cheese, it means that this wheel was produced in a mountain area within the production area, that it has been quality checked by the Consorzio experts at 20 months of aging and that it has undergone a sensory analysis.



PARMIGIANO REGGIANO THE VALUE OF BIODIVERSITY

Maturation

The minimum maturation period is 12 months, but it is around 24 months that Parmigiano Reggiano reaches the maturity most suited to expressing its typical characteristics. It can also be aged for longer, up to 36 or 48 months or even more, revealing unexplored aromas and fragrances.

Cattle breeds

Parmigiano Reggiano can be produced from the milk of different breeds of cows, including:

- **Modenese or Bianca Modenese**
- **Reggiana (commonly known as “Red Cows” or “Vacche Rosse”)**
- **Bruna**
- **Italian Frisona**

Additional voluntary certifications

Parmigiano Reggiano can be produced in accordance with additional voluntary certifications:

Organic – Parmigiano Reggiano from organic production requires the product to be certified in accordance with European Union legislation on organic production.

Kosher – Kosher Parmigiano Reggiano, intended for observant Jewish consumers, requires that all stages of production, from milking to portioning, be certified according to kasherut, the Jewish dietary laws based on the interpretation of the Torah. The processing stages are supervised by a rabbi and controlled by Ok Kosher Certification, one of the most accredited and recognised bodies in the world of kosher certification.

Halal – Halal Parmigiano Reggiano complies with both the PDO production specification and the provisions of the Islamic law regarding “permitted foods” based on the Koran. The certification, which makes the product suitable for the Islamic market, involves strict requirements, particularly in terms of traceability and controls, in order to certify compliance with Islamic doctrine.

PORTIONED AND GRATED PARMIGIANO REGGIANO

Parmigiano Reggiano PDO pre-packaged in the area of origin

Since August 2012, the packaging of Parmigiano Reggiano cheese, grated and portioned, with and without rind, must be carried out within the area of origin by authorised and certified operators.

The product label must feature the 'Parmigiano Reggiano wedge and wheel' certification logo.



Since April 2018, the portioned product must also indicate the minimum ageing period, in addition to all other information required by current legislation.

The certification logo can also be found on the label in these versions, depending on the wheel from which the portion comes.



Starting from 24 April 2025, the certification logo, illustrated in the previous page, has been replaced with a new version, which will be progressively applied to the new labelling of pre-packaged Parmigiano Reggiano cheese.



The Mezzano, Export and Premium marks are going to be featured on the labeling as follow:



Example of a labelling of pre-packaged Parmigiano Reggiano cheese



PARMIGIANO REGGIANO PDO PRE-PACKAGED AT THE RETAIL OUTLET

The cutting/grating and packaging of Parmigiano Reggiano cheese may be carried out at the retail outlet only for sale to the final consumer in the establishment where these operations took place.

Preferably, these operations should be carried out in front of the consumer at their request, but it is permitted to prepare (cut/grate and pre-pack for direct sale) a limited quantity of portions, provided that the consumer always has the option of requesting that the portion be cut/grated in his presence from a whole wheel or parts of a wheel of 'Parmigiano Reggiano'. It is preferable that the portions be packaged in film rather than vacuum-packed.

It is important to remember that retailers who purchase parts of whole wheel to be cut/grated at their retail point must make sure that the product has been packaged by operators included in the 'Parmigiano Reggiano' PDO control system and that the product is certified.

Distance selling (including sales via online shops)

As this involves sales without the physical and simultaneous presence of the supplier and consumer, it does not fall under the exception referred to in the previous point. Parmigiano Reggiano pre-packaged at the retail point cannot therefore be sold via distance selling; in this case, it is necessary to sell Parmigiano Reggiano pre-packaged in its area of origin.

LABELLING FOR PRODUCTS PRE-PACKAGED AT THE RETAIL OUTLET

The use of the 'Parmigiano Reggiano wedge and wheel' certification logo is prohibited on the labelling of Parmigiano Reggiano cheese that has been cut/grated and pre-packaged for direct sale at the retail point.



The ingredients of 'Parmigiano Reggiano' are only raw, partially skimmed cow's milk, salt and calf rennet:
the use of any additives or preservatives is prohibited.

Pursuant to Article 44 of Regulation (EU) No. 1169/11, for foods offered for sale to the final consumer without pre-packaging, packaged on the sale premises at the consumer's request or pre-packaged for direct sale, it is mandatory to provide information on substances or products that cause allergies or intolerances.

Without prejudice to the provisions of Article 19 of Legislative Decree No. 231 of 15 December 2017, for Parmigiano Reggiano, it is recommended that the following be included on the label of products pre-packaged for direct sale at the retail point:

- *'Parmigiano Reggiano' PDO cheese*
- *Ingredients: "MILK, salt and rennet"*

It is always advisable to also indicate the ageing of the cheese on the label, which can be obtained from whole wheels (in this case, the age indicated must be reached) or, in the case of purchasing parts of a wheel, from the mandatory indication of the minimum ageing on the label.

If cheese from the categories described above (Mezzano, Export, Premium) is used, these references must be indicated in the sales description: for example, 'Parmigiano Reggiano Mezzano cheese'.

In order not to mislead consumers, it is not possible to use qualifying adjectives (top, super, extra, etc.) other than those provided for in the product specification.

According to ART. 37 of EU Regulation 2024/1143, the Union symbol shall appear on the label in the same field of vision as the name Parmigiano Reggiano PDO.



HOW TO CUT PARMIGIANO REGGIANO

Each portion of Parmigiano Reggiano should bear the words 'Parmigiano Reggiano' so that consumers can verify its authenticity.

If you want to find out how to cut a wheel of Parmigiano Reggiano, watch the video by scanning the following QR code or clicking on the following link: www.youtube.com/watch?v=WsHsLaYiKIU

Incorrect cutting



Correct cutting



Would you like to learn about the best way to open and cut a wheel of Parmigiano Reggiano cheese?

Look at our tutorial <https://www.parmigianoreggiano.com/en-US/product-guide-cutting-and-storage> or read the QR code.

SURVEILLANCE

The Consortium collaborates, in accordance with the directives issued by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry (MASAF), in the surveillance, protection and safeguarding of the PDO 'Parmigiano Reggiano' from abuse, acts of unfair competition, counterfeiting, improper use of the protected designation and any behaviour prohibited by law (*Law 526/99, Art. 14, paragraph 15, letter d*).

The name Parmigiano Reggiano is protected under European Union legislation (now Regulation (EU) 2024/1143). It should be noted that the name Parmesan has been considered by the Court of Justice of the European Union as an evocation of the Parmigiano Reggiano and may therefore only be used for Parmigiano Reggiano PDO.

Any use of the name Parmigiano Reggiano, as well as the name Parmesan or other names evocative of the PDO Parmigiano Reggiano, for products that do not comply with the PDO specification, may be sanctioned on the basis of current legislation and the case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union.

PARMIGIANO REGGIANO IN CATERING

In addition to the general principles already expressed for retail points, which also apply to catering, please note that the name must be indicated on menus in a complete and correct manner:

Parmigiano Reggiano PDO.

The use of abbreviations is prohibited and it should be noted that the use of the individual terms 'Parmigiano' and 'Reggiano' is also reserved for Parmigiano Reggiano cheese.

If Parmigiano Reggiano is grated at the restaurant to be served to customers, in order to maintain its freshness and organoleptic properties, it is recommended that it be grated just before serving or in quantities that do not require it to be stored in cheese boxes for more than a day. In order to allow customers to appreciate the organoleptic characteristics of the product, it is recommended that Parmigiano Reggiano be served at room temperature, removing it from the refrigerator at least half an hour beforehand.

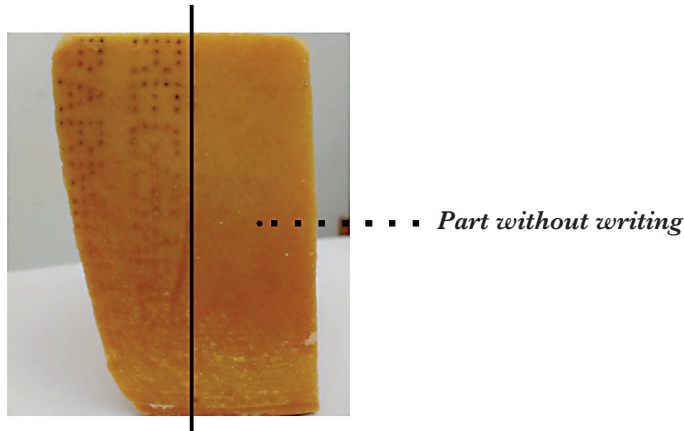
FAQ

Can I label portions that do not have the dots on the rind as Parmigiano Reggiano?

It may happen that the stencilling band that wraps the side of the wheel, impressing the dotted lettering ‘Parmigiano Reggiano’, does not cover the entire wheel in the case of large size wheels, leaving a section without the dotted lettering ‘Parmigiano Reggiano’.

The absence of distinctive marks may also occur in the case of portions of cheese that have a portion of rind obtained from the flatside of the wheel (e.g. the centre of the wheel).

These portions may still be labelled as “Parmigiano Reggiano cheese”.



What are the white dots often found in the cheese?

They are crystals of an amino acid called tyrosine. This amino acid accumulates during the ageing process because it is released, together with other amino acids, by the breakdown of milk proteins by enzymes. Therefore, the presence of tyrosine crystals is an important indicator for consumers that Parmigiano Reggiano has been properly matured.



I AM LACTOSE INTOLERANT, CAN I EAT PARMIGIANO REGGIANO?

Yes. In Parmigiano Reggiano, from the very first hours of the cheese's life, lactic bacteria carry out glycolytic processes on the sugars in the milk, which cause all the lactose to be transformed into lactic acid.

All Parmigiano Reggiano (aged for a minimum of 12 months) is naturally lactose-free*.

** “The absence of lactose is a natural consequence of the typical process used to produce Parmigiano Reggiano. It contains less than 0.01g/100g of galactose.”*

WHAT ARE THE NUTRITIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PARMIGIANO REGGIANO?

Parmigiano Reggiano contains only 30% water and as much as 70% nutrients: this is why it is a cheese very rich in protein, vitamins and minerals.

A portion of 25 g of Parmigiano Reggiano provides a high protein content that contributes to the growth and maintenance of muscle mass. The same portion also provides a high calcium content that contributes to normal energy metabolism and normal muscle function; it is also a source of phosphorus.

Can you eat the rind?

Yes. The rind of Parmigiano Reggiano is edible because the cheese contains no additives or preservatives and the rind does not undergo any kind of preservative treatment. The rind is therefore completely natural. However, before using it, it is advisable to clean it thoroughly to remove any impurities that may have accumulated during the ageing process and to remove any casein plate, if present.



HOW SHOULD I STORE PARMIGIANO REGGIANO AT HOME?

When purchasing a piece of fresh Parmigiano Reggiano, whether pre-packaged or vacuum-packed, it should be stored in the refrigerator at a temperature between 4 and 8 °C. If vacuum-packed, the cheese generally has a shelf life of six months, which is determined by the operator who has packaged it.

Once the package has been opened, or in the case of purchasing a piece of cheese cut directly from the wheel, contact with air should be avoided as much as possible to prevent hardening and excessive drying of the outer portion of the tip and the possible formation of a layer of mould on the outer layer (especially with less matured cheese).

It is therefore advisable to use glass or plastic containers; another practical solution is to wrap the Parmigiano Reggiano in food-grade cling film.

Organoleptic characteristics

The sensory development of Parmigiano Reggiano during its various stages of aging. In tasting a piece of Parmigiano Reggiano we must remember that the complexity of flavours and aromas are there not only because of how the cows are fed and the high technology in using the milk, but also because of the very long ageing of the cheese.

To indicate the ageing, the stamps created by the Consortium for all ages (for each month of ageing) may be requested. In addition, organoleptic descriptive adjectives have been defined for certain maturity classes, which may be used in combination with the ageing. As regards these latter, the Consortium has created stamps for all ages (for each month of ageing) too.



12-19 months – Parmigiano Reggiano with 12-19 months of maturation has a harmonious and delicate flavour with scents of milk, yogurt and fresh fruit. It is particularly suitable for aperitifs paired with sparkling white wines, or to enrich salads and cold dishes.



20-26 months – Parmigiano Reggiano with 20-26 months of maturation is soluble, crumbly and grainy with the right balance between mildness and richness, with notes of fresh fruit, nuts and meat stock. Perfect with medium body wines and to add flavour to all the dishes of the Italian tradition.



27-34 months – Parmigiano Reggiano with 27-34 months of maturation is particularly crumbly and grainy. The flavour is pronounced with notes of spices, nuts and meat stock. It is an ideal ingredient for filled and baked pastas or to be tasted at the end of meals, paired with fruit and honey.



35-45 months – Parmigiano Reggiano with 35-45 months of maturation has passed the test of time and releases pleasant scents of spices. It is an exclusive gift and a pleasant accompaniment to be tasted with structured and meditation wines.



CONSORZIO FORMAGGIO PARMIGIANO-REGGIANO

Via Kennedy, 18 - 42124 Reggio Emilia (IT)

parmigianoreggiano.com

istituzionali@parmigianoreggiano.it