

Cheese from Pastured Cows is Unique

Preliminary research from the University of Wisconsin-Madison shows that cheese from the milk of pastured cows tastes significantly different from other cheese. A consumer panel tended to prefer cheese made from the milk of cows fed pasture and grain compared to other cheese.

The consumer panel compared cheeses made from the milk of cows on three different feeding systems. The three feeding systems were pasture only, pasture plus grain, and a grain-based total mixed ration (TMR, a ration that combines forage, grain, minerals, vitamins and protein supplements in one mixture).

The panelists gave the pasture plus grain cheese the highest scores for flavor, texture and overall liking. The cheese from the milk produced by cows fed a TMR and pasture plus grain had a more buttery flavor than the pasture only cheese according to the consumer panel.

Other findings from the research project indicated that the cheese made from the pasture plus grain cows was darker in color, with more yellowish and reddish hues than the pale TMR cheese. The pasture only cheese was consistently softer than the cheese from the other treatments. However, the reasons for this were unclear.

This study was not able to identify the chemical compounds causing the flavor differences. Researchers suggest that further work will be needed to confirm what compounds play a role in producing the grassy flavor found in cheese from milk produced by cows on pasture.