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Danish Blue Cheese

Danish Blue Cheese was created by Marius Boel in Denmark in the 20th century. It was meant to rival the taste, texture and aroma of Roquefort cheese, which was reportedly invented in 1070 AD. Famous predecessors to Roquefort and Danish blue cheese include Stilton, which can be traced back to the 18th century, and Gorgonzola, generally considered the oldest blue cheese, thought to have originated in around 879 AD. Interestingly, history indicates that Gorgonzola did not have its distinguishing blue veins until the 11th century.

Culinary accounts of blue cheese history indicate it was most likely an accidental occurrence. A particularly popular legend is that a young shepherd, caring for his abundant sheep in the hills of Roquefort, France, spotted a beautiful maiden far off in the distance while having his lunch. He hastily turned his sheep over to the care of his dog and ran to the closest cave to leave his unattended lunch of bread and ewe's milk curds in a safe, cool place. He ran as quickly as he could to chase after the fair lass. He searched tirelessly for days, but alas, he could not find her. Exhausted, despondent and starving he returned to his sheep and the caves where he'd placed his lunch. He was taken aback when he saw his bread and cheese had grown quite mouldy. However, hunger overtook the shepherd and he ate his old, mouldy lunch anyway. He was quite pleasantly surprised by the delicious flavour. And so it's said this was the birth of Roquefort cheese.

The story is that caves were used to store many types of cheeses and other products that required refrigeration since there were no types of man-made refrigeration techniques available. When the temperatures and moisture levels in the caves fluctuated, moulds reportedly formed on some of the cheeses. Instead of cutting the mould off of some of the cheese, a worker tasted it and found it had improved the

original flavour of the product. Further experimentation found that inserting the mould into the cheese produced even better flavour and texture.

For years, Danish blue cheese was served in many countries mainly as a snack accompanied by crackers or toast, a crumbly topping for salads or with fruit as part of the dessert course. It is traditional in Denmark to top biscuits and breads with Danish blue cheese and serve it for breakfast or as a snack. This cheese, along with other varieties of blue cheese, has gained popularity in recent years as a topping for hamburgers, steaks and baked potatoes as well.

So why in the world is the top selling Blue cheese in North America from Denmark and not from France, the home of Blue cheese? In the 1920s, a Dane named Marius Boel discovered an innovation to improve the taste of classic French sheep's milk blue cheese Roquefort, by substituting cow milk for sheep's milk. The result was a creamier, richer, and fuller flavoured cheese- Danish Blue, basically Roquefort made from cow's milk. It's also easier to make, cows produce a lot more milk than sheep do. Danish Blue cheese was first manufactured in 1927. This blue cheese is inoculated with *Penicillium Roqueforti*, and is made from whole pasteurized cow's milk. The Blue culture is added right into the cheese milk. Like other blues the culture requires a lot of oxygen to develop correctly, thus the cheeses are pierced with stainless steel needles, which leave a large number of air ducts. When you cut open this cheese you can see the blue lines running through the paste where it was pierced. The culture develops from the inside towards the surface of the cheese. After approximately one month, the cheese is ripe and ready to go.

There are such types of Danish Cheese:

Blue Castello which is made from cow milk and shaped like a half-moon. Blue Castello is a creamy cheese. Enriched in cream, it has blue colour in the form of fairly thick horizontal lines.

Cream Havarti is the most famous cheese of Denmark. Cream Havarti is a semi-soft and is characterized by being both table cheese and dessert cheese. It is also available in flavours, such as dill, jalapeno, pepper, garlic and herbs.

Danablu (Danish Blue) is also called Marmorata. Danablu is a block shaped cheese and has a sharp, almost metallic taste. The cheese tastes very creamy in the mouth. It is used as a table cheese and it works very well with salads.

Danbo is a rectangular-shaped cheese that has smooth, dry, yellow rind and is sometimes covered with red wax. One of the most popular Danish cheeses, it has a pale, elastic interior, with a few small holes.

Danish Fontina is pale yellow in colour and, has a semi-soft texture with a mild sweet flavour. The cheese is great as table cheese, sandwich cheese and also goes well with light wine.

Esrom is made from cow milk. Esrom has a mild, pleasant taste. It is rectangular in shape with smooth, sticky, pale yellow colour. Some varieties of the Esrom cheese are stronger in flavour and contain garlic, pepper or onion.

Fynbo comes from the island of Fyn Fynbo. Fynbo cheese is produced with pasteurized milk and ferments. Typically, it is shaped like a cylinder.

Havarti is named after the farm in Denmark. Havarti is a traditional, creamery cheese with semi-soft texture. It is a simple, washed-rind cheese with irregular holes throughout. The cheese is also available in an enriched version with added cream, which is softer and feels more luxurious in the mouth. There is also a version with caraway seeds.

Maribo is named after the town in the island of Lolland. Maribo cheese is creamery and semi-hard in nature. Maribo has a firm, dry interior with numerous irregular holes. It is usually coated in yellow wax and is sometimes flavoured with caraway seeds.

Molbo is made from cow milk. Molbo cheese is semi-hard in texture. The Molbo cheese is made in Danish region of Mols. It is a table cheese that has a delicate, light flavour.

Mycella is a Danish version of Gorgonzola, with blue-green mould and mild aromatic taste. Mycella is a creamery, blue cheese which is made from cow's milk. It is a table cheese used for snacks or to salads. Though the interiors of the cheese have a pale buttery look, it is attractive on the outside.

Saga is an amalgamation of blue cheese and brie. Saga is a creamy, blue-veined cheese that has a white-mould rind. Mild to taste, it is an excellent dessert cheese and is served with fruit and wine. It also works well in salads and on a cracker.

Samsø is named after the island of Samsø. Samsø cheese has a supple, elastic texture, with a few irregular-sized holes. Made from pasteurized cow's milk, it comes in the shape of disks or blocks

The best way to store Danish Blue cheese is in a clean, cool and dry place. The environment in which the cheese is stored should prevent contamination by pathogenic bacteria.

References:

1. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_cheese
2. <http://www.nationalhistoriccheesemakingcenter.org/cheesemaking-history.aspx>.