

# say CHEESE

For Cheese Lovers

2010:  
THE YEAR TO DISCOVER  
GREAT CHEESES



BUY IT, WRAP IT, S  
Keeping Cheeses at the Peak of Perfect

## Cheese Talk

Joseph O'Donnell is a tireless advocate and cheerful champion of California's dairy industry, which he maintains is the "best in the country"—clean, tightly regulated and strongly focused on consumers. As executive director of the California Dairy Research Foundation, O'Donnell leads educational and research



programs for dairy producers and processors, all with the goal of continual improvement in best practices.

From nutritional and health standpoints, there is a lot to sort through when it comes to cheese. With a PhD in dairy science, O'Donnell is a great source to bust myths and provide straight-up answers, so Say Cheese posed some questions.

**Say Cheese:** Some people are lactose intolerant. What does that mean for them when it comes to eating and enjoying cheese?

**Joseph O'Donnell:** It absolutely is no problem for them. Cheese won't bother them a bit. When you make cheese, especially hard cheeses like Cheddar, Monterey Jack, Parmesan and the like, the curds are separated out and pressed. What's left behind is whey. Virtually all of the lactose is contained in the liquid part—in this case the whey, so there is very little lactose in the finished product.

**SC:** It's cold season. Is it an old wife's tale that dairy products such as milk, yogurt and cheese are best avoided because they produce an excess of phlegm?

**JOD:** I've never seen any hard data to prove that dairy products can cause someone to be phlegmy. It's more likely caused by a dry mouth that's unrelated to milk or dairy. In fact, if you're sick, you want to make sure your nutrition is up to speed. Dairy products deliver nutritional balance in a very efficient process so I would argue that they should be consumed at these times.

**SC:** What about the fat content of cheeses—is it something to worry about?

**JOD:** Cheese often gets a bum rap for being high in fat. It contains milk fat and that's a natural fat with a lot of complexity.

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With cholesterol counts, it's not about the cholesterol in foods as much as it is about the cholesterol that is produced in your body. Milk fat helps increase HDLs (high-density lipids), the good cholesterol. In the context of a balanced diet, people need to pay attention to that and the ratio of good to bad cholesterol rather than just their total cholesterol count.

**SC:** Speaking of good, in its current advertising, the California dairy industry promotes its "happy cows." What makes the bovines so jovial?

**JOD:** Consumers make our cows happy. If they produce good milk, the cows get to keep their jobs. And it's not a bad deal for them. Environmentally, California has the strictest air and water controls of all the states and dairymen have to be in full compliance. That means the cows are in great shape; there is a lot of emphasis on proper management and animal welfare. No one wants products from sick animals. Healthy animals equal healthy products.