

## THE CHEESE CONSUMING CULTURE IN CENTRAL CROATIA AND SOUTHEASTERN SLOVENIA

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### Abstract

Cheese represents a group of fermented milk products which contain different essential substances, particularly high-quality proteins, minerals, calcium and phosphorus, as well as some B-group vitamins, which puts it in the group of food with high nutritional value and makes it the basis of a healthy diet. There are over 50 kinds of cheeses on the market today that vary in appearance, aroma, flavor and texture, and they are produced either industrially or in small family farms, which gives consumers a wide selection. Therefore, the aim of this study was to investigate the consumer knowledge about cheese in Central Croatia and South eastern Slovenia, the way that consumers choose a particular type of cheese and the amount of cheese in their daily diet.

The research instrument used, was a survey that included 348 interviewees, 161 from Central Croatia and 186 from Southeastern Slovenia.

The respondents recognized cheese as nutritionally valuable food (over 87%) and it makes about 24.73% of their total consumption of dairy products. In Central Croatia cheese is consumed several times a week, mostly as part of breakfast (44.72%). The consumers of Southeastern Slovenia also consume cheese several times a week, but mostly as a snack (40.86%). In both regions most respondents buy cheese in large shopping centers, and the purchase is carried out on the basis of sensory properties (approximately 64.60% of respondents) and the price (about 68.82 % respondents). The Consumers of both regions mostly consume fresh and semi-hard cheese produced out of cow milk.

Conducted research shows the need for more intensive consumer education about cheese, the need to increase the culture of eating cheese and the promotion of local cheese production, especially on small family farms of Central Croatia and Southeastern Slovenia.

**Key words:** Cheese, Consumers, Consuming culture.