

# Cheese Making in the Veneto Region of Italy – Relevance and Implications to Australia



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ISS Institute/Italy (Veneto) Fellowship

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# Executive Summary

The Australian Cheese Industry is young in comparison to Europe's long and successful cheese making history. Italy in particular is recognised as a European country with a long history of cheese making and one that has regulations in place to protect its traditional cheese recipes and cheese making practices from being lost.

At present the Australian Cheese Making Industry is progressive and comprised of many producers operating on various scales. This includes small farmhouse producers who milk their own cows and then produce their own cheese, to much larger industrial cheese plants which source their milk from a variety of dairy farms and companies and produce cheese on a large scale. The variety of cheese styles produced in Australia is continually increasing, in part due to the very nature of producing something with ever changing raw ingredients, for example seasonal changes in milk, and in part due to consumer pressure and desire for new cheese styles and more European style cheese to be produced in Australia using fresh Australian produce.

With this in mind the primary aim of this Fellowship was to learn, in detail, the production techniques of Northern Italian cheese styles, in particular Asiago.

After returning to Australia armed with the skills and knowledge gained, Vazzoler intends to create a new cheese for Australian producers and the Australian market. The Fellow's overseas program provided a valuable opportunity to gain first hand experience of some of the age old cheese making processes that are still in practise in the Veneto region of Italy.

The specific areas of study for the Fellowship included:

- Visits to small scale producers making traditional regional cheese, with the cheese of interest being Asiago Pressato.
- Gaining an understanding of running a small scale cheese plant.
- Investigating current education models in Italy for cheesemakers and identify possible information exchange opportunities.
- Developing new cheese recipes that blend old world tradition and new world innovation to meet the requirements of the Australian marketplace.

This Overseas Fellowship tour made possible by the ISS Institute, and funding from Skills Victoria, Victorian Government, is the start to an exciting new cheese for Australia – a table cheese made from pasteurised whole milk, acidified with cultures, rennet set, semi cooked curd, vat salt application and a short maturation period. A cheese with a production time line and flavour profile that has great potential for Australian producers and consumers. This report details the cheese making practises observed in Italy and details the methodology for producing this semi-cooked curd cheese. It also identifies a series of recommendations and steps required to develop a new Australian produced cheese for the domestic and international market.