Plaisentif, the cheese of violets



At the end of June the herds rise to high pastures where the meadows are an explosion of colours. They eat grass and flowers which improve their well-being and the milk they produce is characterised by a variety of flavours and properties: grazing quality can greatly affect the organoleptic characteristics of raw milk, with particular reference to fatty acid composition and volatile aromatic compounds.

Location

In Italian mountain regions most of the milk is transformed into traditional cheeses. One of them, Plaisentif, also known as the ancient "cheese of the violets", is produced in the Chisone and Susa Valleys (Piedmont) during the flowering period of violets (June-July), using raw cow's milk. Violets are the first flowers to blossom on the slopes, just after the snow has melted. In July, when no violets are left, the cattle feed on clover and other wildflowers. That's why the cheese has got a fruity, appetizing and aromatic taste.

History

The Plaisentif origins date back to about 1570: neglected for centuries, it has been re-evaluated since the late 1990, when the mayor of Perosa Argentina found a document which mentioned the cheese as a gift given to the town governor by the local shepherds, to get him to allow the free goods exchange between Delfinato and Chisone valley.

The first wheels were manufactured in 2000 and, in 2007, the producers of Plaisentif started up a consortium, registering their trademark and production protocol at the Chamber of Commerce in Turin.



Production

Following the ancient recipe, around 1,000 Plaisentif wheels weighing about 2,5 kg (their size is smaller than the traditional pasturage cheeses) are produced annually, each bearing the manufacturer's name, the CE mark and batch number. After maturing in stone cellars for at least 60 days, the 'P' logo is fire-branded if the product meets the quality requirements. The cheese can be marketed only since the third Sunday in September, when the historical commemoration and the local trade fair takes place in Perosa Argentina.

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1 Answer the questions.

1. Why are cattle moved to high pastures at the end of June?
2. What contributes to enrich milk of flavours and properties?
3. What is the typical use of milk in the alpine economy?
4. What is the violet flowering time?
5. Do cows feed on violets only?
6. Has Plaisentif been produced since 1570?
7. Do shepherds follow a modern processing method to manufacture Plaisentif?
8. In the past, who was gifted with this cheese?
9. Where are the wheels stored to mature?
10. When is the 'P' logo fire-branded on the wheel?
11. When can the cheese be sold?

2 Describe a typical product of your region, focusing on:

- production area
- historical references
- production time (if it is a seasonal product)
- features (taste, smell, flavour, texture, size, weight, etc.)
- trademark, seal of guarantee.

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