



LESSON 13: "LET'S TALK ABOUT CHEESE"

"I could give up meat, but I could never live without cheese!"

Does that statement sound familiar? Trust me, I've been there. I too, used to be under its spell and eat tons of it. Camembert, mozzarella, gorgonzola, gouda, brie, parmesan... What's not to love, right?

When you think about what cheese actually is, you'll come to realize that it's a pretty gross substance and yet chances are many people just won't care, because it's *that* good. But is it really?

What is cheese?

According to Merriam Webster, cheese is "*a food consisting of the coagulated, compressed, and usually ripened curd of milk separated from the whey*". In short, cheese is the substance derived from heavily processing and condensing the milk of certain female mammals.

The true cost of cheese

Do cows need to be milked? When it comes to lactation, cows are actually quite similar to female human beings. Have you ever heard of a woman having to be milked so that her breasts won't explode? The idea alone sounds ridiculous, doesn't it? Like human beings, in order to give milk, cows have to be pregnant and have a baby. The only way a mother (both human and non human) has to be milked is if her baby isn't drinking the milk.

Here's what the dairy industry doesn't want you to know: nowadays, most cows are forcefully and artificially inseminated and impregnated so as to start producing milk.

Once the calf is born, he or she is taken from his or her mother (many undercover investigators who researched the treatment of farm animals have reported that the sound a cow makes when her baby is taken from her is the worst and most painful cry they've ever heard). If it's male, it gets killed and sold as veal. If the baby is female, she either gets killed too or she will be raised to step into her mother's footsteps (on foods like GMO corn instead of milk because, if she drank the milk that was meant for her, it couldn't be sold to humans). After giving birth, the mother cow is impregnated again and again. After a few years, when her body is depleted and her reproductive capabilities are exhausted, she will most likely be killed and her meat be sold to fast food chains. Her skin, on the other hand, will be turned into leather for the fashion industry. During her short life, her main purpose is to produce more milk (and to produce it constantly). She's injected with hormones that'll make her udder grow so large that it almost touches the floor and it becomes excruciatingly painful for her to carry. She is then milked as often as possible. What image pops up in your head when you

read that? That of a friendly farmer in overalls whistling as he carries his bucket and sits down to gently milk his beloved cow? That might have been the case at some point or still is on some small family farms, but in most cases, she is milked by a machine that was not designed to be gentle, but strictly efficient. The repeated and stressful milking process causes many infections resulting in pus secretions contaminating the milk.

Can't be legal, can it? Oh, but it is.

"It turns out that standard dairy cows are medicated with recombinant bovine growth hormone (rBGH) to stimulate a much higher than normal milk production. This causes severe stress that results in mastitis, an infection of the udders of sick and stressed cows. This infection is, of course, treated with antibiotics, helping to breed more antibiotic resistant organisms. It is literally unbelievable that one liter (a little over a quart) of Californian milk contained 298 million pus cells in 2003, 11 million more pus cells than it contained in 2002. You might console yourself by saying "but milk is pasteurized. Surely the cells are cleared!" No, they are not cleared, they are only heated."

-Charlotte Gerson of the Gerson Institute – www.gerson.org

Calcium and Casein

Why do we even drink cow's milk and eat dairy products? From an early age on, we are told to drink and eat dairy in order to get enough calcium and therefore get stronger bones. Yet, there are more than enough plant-based sources for calcium and the acidity in animal products may actually be causing us more harm than good.

An ingredient that you will, however, get plenty of when you eat cheese, is **casein**. Here's why that may not be a good thing:

Casein is a kind of protein found not only in cow's milk but also in human milk. A baby (no matter the species) needs its milk to survive and grow, but a baby can't really use words to express that it wants to be fed. That's why there is casein in the milk, its effect is comparable to that of a drug the baby becomes addicted to. If it doesn't get its milk, it goes into withdrawal mode, which is not comfortable at all. That's why babies cry when they're hungry, because they are, literally, addicts. This signal alerts the mother and she can make sure her baby is fed. While human babies need their mother's milk to gain a few pounds in their first year of life, a baby cow needs its milk to gain hundreds of pounds in the same amount of time, which means that there is much more casein in cow's milk than in human milk. When the milk is turned into cheese, the casein becomes even more concentrated. So, does that mean cheese is a drug?

Is cheese a drug?

In order to answer that question in more detail, here's a passage from the book *Breaking The Food Seduction* (which I highly recommend!) by Dr. Neal Barnard:

"In 1981, Eli Hazum and his colleagues at Wellcome Research Laboratories in Research Triangle Park, N.C., reported a remarkable discovery. Analyzing samples of cow's milk, they found traces of a chemical that looked very much like morphine. They put it to one chemical test after another. Finally they arrived at the conclusion that, in fact, it is morphine. There is not a lot of it. But indeed morphine has been found in both cow's milk and human milk. Morphine, of course, is an opiate and is highly addictive. So how did it get into milk? At first researchers theorized that it must have come from the cows' diets. After all, morphine used in hospitals comes from poppies and is also produced naturally by a few other plants that the cows might have been eating. But it turns out that cows actually produce it within their bodies, just as poppies do. Traces of morphine, along with codeine and other opiates, are apparently produced in cows' livers and can end up in their milk. But that was only the beginning, as other researchers soon found. Cow's milk – or the milk of any other species, for that matter – contains a protein called casein, that breaks apart during digestion to release a whole host of opiates, called casomorphins. A cup of cow's milk contains about six grams of casein. Skim milk contains a bit more, and casein is concentrated in the production of cheese."

What to eat instead?

If you ever find yourself missing cheese, there are plenty of vegan alternatives. Companies like *Follow your Heart*, *Miyoko's*, *Daiya*, *Field Roast* and *Go Veggie* make amazing vegan cheese alternatives that taste surprisingly similar to cheese or you can make your own at home using nuts, nutritional yeast or even potatoes.