

## Production Flow Chart

The milk produced in the area of origin undergoes an artisan process that is entrusted to the skills and passion of cheese masters. The result of a thousand years of expertise and culture, the choices made by the cheese masters are fundamental in the production of Parmigiano-Reggiano, since craftsmanship is one of its distinctive features. In fact, every cheese master must “interpret” milk every day and turn it into cheese by favouring and enhancing the distinctiveness of its indigenous microflora.

The milk is used raw, i.e. without having undergone any heat treatment, and since the use of additives is not allowed, the cheese obtained is completely natural.

Parmigiano-Reggiano is made using the milk from two milkings, delivered separately to the dairies in the evening and in the morning.

The milk from the evening milking is poured into large basins, where it rests through the night to allow the fat to rise naturally to the surface. In the morning, **the milk is skimmed** by removing the layer of cream on the surface, it is poured into the typical inverted bell-shaped copper cauldrons and mixed to the whole milk from the morning milking, immediately after its arrival at the dairy. This is why **Parmigiano-Reggiano** is a semi-fat cheese.

Fermented whey, which is a natural culture of indigenous lactic ferments obtained from the previous day’s cheese making, is added to the two milks.

When the milk is heated to 33°C, natural **calf** rennet is added and, due to its richness in enzymes, the milk curdles within approximately 12-15 minutes. Subsequently, the curd is manually cut using a tool formed by sharp blades **known as “spino”**.

This process breaks the curd down to the size of wheat grains now ready for the cooking process that reaches a peak temperature of 55°C.

At the end of the cooking process, the cheese grains settle on the bottom of the cauldron forming a single mass which, after approximately **60** minutes, is taken out by the skilful gestures of the cheese master, and cut in half. **Every** cauldron, **in fact, produces** two “twin” wheels of Parmigiano-Reggiano.

Wrapped in the traditional linen cloth, the cheese mass is placed in a mould called “*fascera*” and slightly pressed to drain out the whey.

At this point, the casein plate bearing a unique and progressive **alphanumeric code** is applied to identify each wheel.

In the evening of the production day, a special plastic stencilling band is introduced between the mould and the cheese mass. By pressing against the forming rind, the band stencils the other marks of origin **all around the cheese wheel**: the characteristic dotted inscription “Parmigiano-Reggiano”, the identification number of the dairy, the production month and year.

After a few days, the wheels are salted by plunging them in a saturated solution of water and salt for 20-25 days.

**So, only three ingredients are used for making Parmigiano-Reggiano: milk, rennet and salt.**

Subsequently, the wheels are placed in maturation rooms to rest for at least twelve months.