Invited review: Artisanal Mexican cheeses

Artisanal cheeses are a link to the history and culture of their place of origin, but some may vanish without further study, say experts in the Journal of Dairy Science®

Philadelphia, PA, April 1, 2016 – Artisanal cheesemaking is an important industry in Mexico, but many varieties of artisanal Mexican cheeses are in danger of disappearing because they have not been adequately documented. A team of dairy science experts is working to prevent that loss by collecting the information needed to standardize, protect, and preserve traditional artisanal production processes and to seek protected designation of origin (PDO) status for those that qualify. Their review is published in Articles in Press and will appear in the May 2016 issue of the Journal of Dairy Science®.

“Currently, cheesemaking is one of the most important industries in Mexico,” explained lead investigators Aarón F. González-Córdova and Belinda Vallejo-Cordoba, of the Laboratorio de Química y Biotecnología de Productos Lácteos, Coordinación de Tecnología de Alimentos de Origen Animal, at the Centro de Investigación en Alimentación y Desarrollo, A.C., in Hermosillo, Mexico. “The importance of artisanal cheesemaking is reflected in the estimation that around 70% of all Mexican cheese comes from small-scale productions.”

González-Córdova, Vallejo-Cordoba and colleagues examined the challenges facing artisanal cheesemaking in Mexico. Among those challenges are:

- Compliance with food safety regulations, because most Mexican artisanal cheeses are made using raw milk.
- Large-scale industrial production of cheeses that were once only produced using artisanal methods.
• Difficulty in categorizing local and regional cheeses—in some cases, the same name is used for different cheeses, whereas in others the same cheese may be known by different names in different areas.
• The perception that artisanal cheeses may be unsafe.
• Scarcity of systematic characterization of artisanal Mexican cheeses, including the roles of different groups of microbiota that affect food safety, sensory characteristics, and shelf life.
• Lack of specific defined standards that would allow the cheeses to be included in a PDO system.

In their review, the authors describe the production methods and characteristics of eight important artisanal cheese varieties produced in Mexico and discuss efforts that have been made to preserve these cheeses.

“Certain varieties of artisanal Mexican cheese, such as Bola de Ocosingo, Poro de Balancan, Crema de Chiapas, and regional Cotija cheeses, possess unique characteristics that make them potentially eligible to be protected as PDO products. This distinction could help to expand their frontiers and allow them to become better known and appreciated in other parts of the world,” added González-Córdova and Vallejo-Cordoba. “With sufficient information, official Mexican regulations could be established that would encompass and regulate the manufacture of Mexican artisanal cheeses.”

“There is a rich cultural heritage in the dairy foods that we eat. Artisanal Mexican cheeses are part of that heritage. Unfortunately, a lack of scientific information on manufacturing endangers the future of these unique foods. Preservation of these cheeses will depend, therefore, on dairy foods research,” said Matt Lucy, PhD, Editor-in-Chief, Journal of Dairy Science, and Professor of Animal Science, University of Missouri, USA.

# # #

NOTES FOR EDITORS


Full text of this article is available to credentialed journalists upon request. Contact Eileen Leahy at +1 732-238-3628 or jdsmedia@elsevier.com to obtain copies. Journalists wishing to set up interviews with the authors should contact: Aaron F. González-Córdova, PhD, Centro de Investigación en Alimentación y Desarrollo, A.C. (CIAD) at 52(662)289-2400 Local 303 or aaronglz@ciad.mx.

ABOUT JOURNAL OF DAIRY SCIENCE®
Journal of Dairy Science (JDS), official journal of the American Dairy Science Association, is co-published by Elsevier and FASS Inc. for the American Dairy Science Association. It is the leading general dairy research journal in the world. JDS readers represent education, industry, and government agencies in more than 70 countries with interests in biochemistry, breeding, economics, engineering, environment, food science, genetics, microbiology, nutrition, pathology, physiology, processing, public health, quality assurance, and sanitation. JDS has a 5-year Impact Factor of 3.071 according to the 2014 Journal Citation Reports®, published by Thomson Reuters. www.journalofdairyscience.org

ABOUT THE AMERICAN DAIRY SCIENCE ASSOCIATION (ADSA)
The American Dairy Science Association (ADSA) is an international organization of educators, scientists, and industry representatives who are committed to advancing the dairy industry and keenly aware of the vital role the dairy sciences play in fulfilling the economic, nutritive, and health requirements of the world's population. It provides leadership in scientific and technical support to sustain and grow the global dairy industry through generation, dissemination, and exchange of information and services. Together, ADSA members have discovered new methods and technologies August that have revolutionized the dairy industry.  [www.adsa.org](http://www.adsa.org)

**ABOUT ELSEVIER**

Elsevier ([www.elsevier.com](http://www.elsevier.com)) is a world-leading provider of information solutions that enhance the performance of science, health, and technology professionals, empowering them to make better decisions, deliver better care, and sometimes make groundbreaking discoveries that advance the boundaries of knowledge and human progress. Elsevier provides web-based, digital solutions — among them ScienceDirect ([www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com)), Scopus ([www.scopus.com](http://www.scopus.com)), Elsevier Research Intelligence ([www.elsevier.com/research-intelligence](http://www.elsevier.com/research-intelligence)), and ClinicalKey ([www.clinicalkey.com](http://www.clinicalkey.com)) — and publishes over 2,500 journals, including *The Lancet* ([www.thelancet.com](http://www.thelancet.com)) and *Cell* ([www.cell.com](http://www.cell.com)), and more than 33,000 book titles, including a number of iconic reference works. Elsevier is part of RELX Group ([www.relxgroup.com](http://www.relxgroup.com)), a world-leading provider of information and analytics for professional and business customers across industries. [www.elsevier.com](http://www.elsevier.com)