



HALLOUMI: A SLICE OF CYPRUS IN BRITAIN

Cyprus' best-loved cheese is becoming an international success with cheese buyers

Halloumi is officially recognised worldwide as a distinctive cheese indigenous to Cyprus and has always been the flagship of the island's authentic cuisine. For more than 1,500 years, it has been a key constituent of the local diet and has been closely associated with the culture and traditions of its people.

Halloumi is not simply a product of Cyprus but constitutes part of its heritage and rural life, and is linked to the social solidarity that characterises, even today, the towns and villages of the island. The white semi-hard cheese is made from sheep and/or goat's milk, which can also be blended with cow's milk. Originally it was soaked and preserved in brine, a process which gave the

cheese its salty taste and enabled it to be kept fresh for longer. It is often garnished with mint to add to the taste. Traditionally the mint leaves were used as a preservative, to retain Halloumi's freshness and flavour.

This springy-textured cheese is unique to the island. The flavour of Cyprus Halloumi is the result of a combination of factors such as the warm climate and the fodder that the island produces for Cyprus-bred sheep and goats. The uniqueness of this product has proved an important factor in its success both at home and abroad.

Following its massive success, Halloumi is now manufactured on an industrial scale in technologically-advanced dairy industries approved and registered according to EU

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regulations. These dairy industries are also certified with HACCP and enforce the ISO, a quality system ensuring maximum quality and hygiene. In this scale it is usually marketed in vacuum-packed pieces of 230-280 grams, while when produced on a smaller scale traditional techniques are still maintained, such as the plastic food grade containers in which the cheese is left to mature in brine.

The traditional cheese of Cyprus has secured a worldwide market, with large consignments being despatched regularly to Continental Europe, Australia, the Middle East and the USA. It is one of Cyprus' major export products, with volumes showing a year-on-year increase of 20-25%. The UK remains by far the major export market, taking almost half of the total exports, followed by Sweden and Germany. The first Halloumi exports to the UK date back to the 1920s.

Today Halloumi is no longer an ethnic speciality placed only in

gourmet sections of delicatessen or independent stores; it is a mainstream product, incorporated in many British and European dishes and stocked by most retailers, including major supermarket chains. The British love affair with the Cyprus traditional cheese has grown dramatically thanks to celebrity chefs and consumers' increasingly adventurous culinary tastes. Cafés and restaurants throughout the country serve Halloumi for breakfast, lunch and dinner, vegetarians use it as a meat replacement, and consumers keep inventing new ways to enjoy this Mediterranean delight. It therefore comes as no surprise that the cheese has won over not only consumers but also the judges of international cheese competitions, at which it has received a multitude of awards.

Halloumi has been registered as a Certification Trade Mark in the name of the Ministry of Energy, Commerce, Industry & Tourism of the Republic of Cyprus in the United Kingdom since 1990, and as a Community Collective Trade Mark at the Office of Harmonization of the Internal Market (OHIM) of the European Union since 14th July 2000, in the name of the 'Foundation for the Protection of the Traditional Cheese of Cyprus Named Halloumi'. Producers can use these Trade Marks in relation to their products only if they comply with certain strict product specifications, mainly regarding raw materials, the production procedure, the labelling and the Cypriot origin of the product.

The Cyprus Government has submitted an application to the European Commission for the registration of the names 'Χαλλούμι' (Halloumi)/'Hellim', in Greek and Latin, as Protected Designation of Origin. The European Commission is assessing the application and it is expected that the process will be completed soon.

HOW TO ENJOY HALLOUMI



Halloumi can be eaten raw, grilled, fried or baked. Fresh Halloumi may be consumed with fruit such as melons and grapes, in salads or sandwiches, grated over pasta dishes or as a stuffing in ravioli or vegetables such as aubergines and red peppers.

Grilled Halloumi is worthy of being the centrepiece in a dish – it is delicious served hot, drizzled with olive oil or cut into cubes and added to a kebab with thick chunks of tomato and onion. Its slightly rubbery texture means that it can also be fried without the need of oil or butter – it is ready to serve when it colours around the edges. Chunks of fried Halloumi can be placed on a bed of crisp green salad, drizzled with olive oil and sprinkled with shredded mint. Halloumi burgers are also becoming very popular as a barbecue idea, especially in the summer months. They can be served as a vegetarian dish or combined with a choice of meat.

Whichever the method of cooking, this cheese shows great versatility as it does not melt or spread in high temperatures, which allows for its presence in a broad range of dishes. It retains its shape, with the outside turning a crispy golden-brown colour while its inside texture softens significantly but does not melt.



Find out more

Further information regarding Halloumi and other food exports can be obtained by the Ministry of Energy, Commerce, Industry & Tourism in Cyprus (mct.gov.cy/ts) or the Cyprus High Commission Trade Centre in London (cyprustrade.co.uk).

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