

Taste Terminology



Many factors affect the flavor of cheese. The type of milk used, the animals' feed, and the techniques of the cheese maker all combine to make the individual versions of cheese varieties unique. In other words, there are many Cheddar cheeses—although they are similar in many ways, each version provides the consumer with a unique flavor and texture profile. In addition, keep in mind that the characteristics of cheeses change with serving temperature, age, and other conditions.

The following is a general list of terms often used to describe cheeses. These terms were prepared to provide a baseline vocabulary to help you describe and discuss cheese with your customers. But there is no substitute for experience, so, according to your store's policy, taste the cheeses you sell for yourself. Try a few of the recommended examples to experience the described flavors. Then apply this vocabulary to additional cheese varieties. Lastly, there are no "right" or "wrong" ways to describe cheese. Have fun, try new cheeses, and share your experience with your customers.

Term	Definition/Description	Examples to Try	Tasting Notes
Buttery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flavor similar to butter Cheese with a higher fat content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brie Camembert Gouda 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cold Pack Flavored spreads
Creamy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rich taste Smooth texture or mouthfeel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brie Camembert 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creamy blues Chèvre
Earthy/Rustic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reminiscent of mushrooms or soil Grassy Forest floor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goat Cheese or Chèvre Sheep Manchego 	
Fruity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fragrant, sweet Pineapple notes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Muenster Baby Swiss Aged Cheddars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raw milk cheese Parmesan with age
Mild	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Light, unassuming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> American Colby Mild Cheddar Queso Blanco 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Queso Fresco Mozzarella Fresh Mozzarella
Nutty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nut-like, most characteristic of Swiss-type cheeses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swiss Gruyère Appenzeller 	
Sharp/Piquant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A pungent, biting flavor, but not overly so 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cheddar aged for 2+ years Parmesan Romano 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asiago Blue Gorgonzola
Smoked	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Treated with the addition of liquid smoke or smoked over woodchips 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smoked Gouda Smoked Cheddar Smoked Provolone 	
Spicy/Peppery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peppery flavor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pepper Jack Flavored spreads 	
Strong/Pungent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharp, assertive flavor or aroma, generally stronger than sharp or piquant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aged Brick Limburger Many Blue cheeses 	
Tangy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharp, distinctive Can be associated with high acidity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blue cheese Chèvre 	
Salty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tasting of salt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appenzeller Feta Mozzarella 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pecorino Romano
Sweet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tasting of sugar or honey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mascarpone Jarlsberg 	