

The Parmesan Showdown

Jon Minnick, Associate Editor, Manufacturing Business Technology



The [European Union wants the names of its cheeses back](#) [1] in a move to purify its products and increase sales. The Europeans claim that American-made versions of European cheeses are just not the same thing, and continues to hurt their brand identity. When consumers see Parmesan from Parma, Italy next to a green can of Kraft Parmesan at a cheaper price, which one are they going to buy?

It almost sounds like the Champagne issue all over again. In 2006 the U.S. and the European Union signed a wine trade agreement where the U.S. agreed not to allow new uses of certain terms such as Champagne, Burgundy, Chablis, Port and Chianti. Now American companies tend to either indicate the wine's actual origin or use the term "sparkling wine" instead of Champagne.

So if companies in the U.S. are banned from using names like Parmesan, feta and gorgonzola, what should the industry do?

In a [recent AP story on the subject](#) [2], Errico Auricchio, president of [Wisconsin-based BelGioioso Cheese Inc.](#) [3], says he has no idea what he would call his Parmesan if he had to find a new name.

"I Can't Believe It's Not Parmesan," he jokes.

U.S. dairy producers, cheesemakers and food companies are all fighting the idea, which they say would hurt the \$4 billion domestic cheese industry, endlessly confuse consumers and cost millions of dollars in rebranding. But it doesn't end with cheese.

The Parmesan Showdown

Published on Food Manufacturing (<http://www.foodmanufacturing.com>)

Other products with traditional ties to European countries that could be affected include bologna, Black Forest ham, Greek yogurt, Valencia oranges and prosciutto, among other foods.

While it's understandable that tradition is a powerful force in European Union companies — and they're looking for a fighting chance in the U.S. market — at what point does the whole idea become ridiculous and fall flat? When's the last time you ate Freedom Fries?

Source URL (retrieved on 01/25/2015 - 12:15pm):

<http://www.foodmanufacturing.com/blogs/2014/03/parmesan-showdown>

Links:

[1] <http://www.mbtmag.com/news/2014/03/europe-wants-its-parmesan-back>

[2] http://www.foodmanufacturing.com/news/2014/03/eu-looks-ban-us-using-european-cheese-names?et_cid=3818061&et_rid=651841097&type=image

[3] <http://www.belgioioso.com/index.htm>