

## **The Stretched Curd Cheeses of Molise – Caciocavallo, Stracciata, Scamorza and Il Caseificio Di NUCCI**

### **Gastronomia**

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For 11 generations, the Di Nucci family have been making award-winning cheese in the Apennine hills. In 1662 Leonardo was a shepherd moving his herds along the tratturi - wide tracks leading from the hills of Molise and Abruzzo, for summer grazing, to the plains of Puglia, for winter grazing. Travelling from his home in Capracotta on horseback, carrying copper basins and wooden tubs for daily production, he used a whey starter and raw milk, perfecting the craft of making pasta filata (stretched curd cheese) – caciocavallo, scamorza and stracciata.

In 1924 the Italian government asked Enrico and Luigi Di Nucci, uncle and nephew, to teach other young men of the region. At this time, all shepherds made cheese from their milk, but they were not 'masters' of the craft and produced a poor product. Enrico and Luigi went around Abruzzo (at that time, Molise was part of Abruzzo) taking on apprentices. Thus, many caseifici today can be said to be making cheese of la scuola Di Nucci. This photo of the 2 men, making cheese in jacket and tie (formaggio in giacca e cravatta), has become the family logo.

Franco Di Nucci and his children still use the methods devised by their ancestors, avoiding the use of any preservatives or milk enzymes. In fact, their production qualifies for certain EU exemptions; allowing the use of raw, unpasteurized milk, and using wooden receptacles to keep the hand-worked curd at appropriate temperature. Needless to say the standards of cleanliness and freshness, which they are required to achieve, are very high.

You can really taste the grasses and herbs of the seasons in their cheeses. No two are the same – Franco maintains that the types of grasses, the weather, and even the mood of the cow during milking, are just some of the factors affecting taste and texture. Today they export all around Europe, although not to other continents, as the export of raw milk is prohibited. So, by far the best idea is to come to Molise to sample for yourself!

The town of Agnone, famous for the oldest bell foundry in the world, and the only one by Papal appointment <http://campanemarinelli.com/en/> is also home to Caseificio Di Nucci – winners of Italian Cheese Awards 2017 - <https://www.caseificiodinucci.it/> You can see the production in action and taste the fantastic cheeses. The museum, dedicated to the history of cheese making in the region, and to the family story, is beautifully laid out and makes a wonderful visit when you come to Agnone!

Jenifer Landor is director of Live and Learn Italian, <http://liveandlearnitalian.com/> an immersive language and culture holiday programme based in Agnone, Molise.

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