

A rare cheese

Are you adventurous when it comes to food? Watch this video about a famous Italian food – would you be brave enough to try it?

Tasks

Do the preparation task first. Then watch the video and do the exercises. You can also read the transcript.

Preparation task

Match the definitions (a–h) with the vocabulary (1–8).

Vocabulary

1. a delicacy
2. to consume
3. not for the faint of heart
4. to be infested with
5. a maggot
6. off-putting
7. distinctive
8. texture

Definition

- a. not suitable for people who are easily frightened or shocked
- b. a rare or expensive type of food
- c. to eat or drink
- d. a worm that will become a fly
- e. to have a lot of (negative)
- f. the way a food feels in your mouth
- g. unpleasant and unattractive
- h. easy to recognise because of being different

Task 1

Are the sentences true or false?

	Answer	
1. People in Sardinia have been eating <i>casu marzu</i> for a long time.	True	False
2. The name <i>casu marzu</i> literally means 'dangerous cheese'.	True	False
3. Farmers add extra milk to pecorino cheese to make <i>casu marzu</i> .	True	False
4. It takes around three months for the cheese to be infested with flies and fly larvae.	True	False
5. The cheese passes through the body of the maggots.	True	False
6. It is common for people who eat <i>casu marzu</i> to have maggots living inside their body.	True	False
7. You can buy the cheese all over Europe.	True	False
8. At least three generations of the Ibba family have been making <i>casu marzu</i> .	True	False

Task 2

Write a number (1–7) to put the events in the order they are mentioned.

- _____ The cheese is excreted by the maggots, transforming it into soft and creamy *casu marzu*.
- _____ Cheese flies are allowed to lay eggs in the cheese.
- _____ Milk is produced by Ibba's flock of sheep.
- _____ The cheese is eaten by the maggots.
- _____ A traditional wheel of pecorino cheese is made.
- _____ Finally, the cheese is eaten at special occasions such as weddings or birthday parties
- _____ After about 40 days, the cheese is infested with cheese flies and their larvae (maggots).

Discussion

Are there any foods from your country that are unusual?

Transcript

Presenter: On the Italian island of Sardinia, there's a delicacy that's been consumed for thousands of years. It is known as the world's most dangerous cheese. Yeah, you heard right.

Meet Simone Ibba, a third-generation sheep farmer.

Simone Ibba (in Italian): We have about 250 or 300 sheep that produce milk. We use some of this milk to make a cheese called *casu marzu*.

Presenter: *Casu marzu* literally means 'rotten cheese', and it's not for the faint of heart. Because this cheese is infested with thousands of live maggots. And while that might seem a bit off-putting at first, it's the maggots that give the cheese its distinctive texture and flavour. Here's how it works.

First, a traditional wheel of pecorino cheese is made from sheep's milk. Then, a special fly, called the cheese fly, is allowed to lay its eggs in it.

Simone Ibba (in Italian): In about 40 days, the cheese wheel will be completely invaded by cheese flies and their larvae.

Presenter: Over the course of two to three months, the maggots eat the cheese and then excrete it out again – transforming it into the soft and creamy *casu marzu*.

Simone Ibba (in Italian): The spicy, different, tasty, doughy flavour comes from the work that the fly does.

Presenter: Today, it's a favourite for special occasions like weddings and birthday parties. But eating this cheese can be dangerous.

Simone Ibba (in Italian): Some people think that the larvae will continue to live inside you. It's not like that. Otherwise, we'd be full of maggots because we've eaten them for a lifetime.

Presenter: Even though cases like this are extremely rare, it's risky enough that the cheese is illegal to sell. But farmers like Simone continue to make it for themselves.

Simone Ibba (in Italian): Few people know how to make *casu marzu* cheese any more, but I've always known it; my grandmother knew it, my grandfathers, my uncles.

Presenter: And they just can't get enough.

Simone Ibba (in Italian): *Casu marzu* cheese with prosciutto and a slice of melon – it's to die for.

Answers

Preparation task

1. b
2. c
3. a
4. e
5. d
6. g
7. h
8. f

Task 1

1. True
2. False
3. False
4. False
5. True
6. False
7. False
8. True

Task 2

1. Milk is produced by Ibba's flock of sheep.
2. A traditional wheel of pecorino cheese is made.
3. Cheese flies are allowed to lay eggs in the cheese.
4. After about 40 days, the cheese is infested with cheese flies and their larvae (maggots).
5. The cheese is eaten by the maggots.
6. The cheese is excreted by the maggots, transforming it into soft and creamy *casu marzu*.
7. Finally, the cheese is eaten at special occasions such as weddings or birthday parties.