

USDA Specifications for Ricotta Cheeses

Agricultural Marketing Service

Dairy Division

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I. This document has been developed to aid in the purchase of Ricotta cheeses which are intended for cooking or table uses. It is designed to provide the minimum requirements for Ricotta cheeses according to flavor, body and texture, color, finish and appearance, and packing and packaging. Ricotta cheese may be evaluated as soon as the cheese has cooled to below 45° F. (7° C.). The following types of Ricotta cheeses are covered by this specification:

Type (Composition by fat and moisture).

Type I -- Whole Milk Ricotta. The cheese is manufactured from whole milk, and the finished product shall contain not more than 80.0% moisture and not less than 11.0% milkfat.

Type II -- Part-skim Ricotta. The cheese is manufactured from milk with reduced milkfat content, and the finished product shall contain not more than 80.0% moisture and less than 11.0% but not less than 6.0% milkfat.

Type III -- Ricotta (Ricotone) from whey or skim milk. The cheese is manufactured from skim milk, whey, or a blend of these products and the finished product shall contain not more than 82.5% moisture and less than 1.0% milkfat.

- II. The following documents of the United States Department of Agriculture form a part of this specification:
 - A. General Specifications for Dairy Plants Approved for USDA Inspection and Grading Service.
 - B. Standard Methods for the Examination of Dairy Products, latest edition.
 - C. Dairy Plants Surveyed and Approved for USDA Grading Service.
 - D. United States Standards for Condition of Food Containers. (Copies are available from: Dairy Division, Agricultural Marketing Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250.)
- III. Requirements.

Ricotta cheese. All types of Ricotta cheese that meet this specification shall have been manufactured and/or processed in a plant approved by the Dairy Grading Branch, Dairy Division, Agricultural Marketing Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture as complying with the "General Specifications for Dairy Plants Approved for USDA Inspection and Grading Service." Such plants are eligible to be listed in the document, "Dairy Plants Surveyed and Approved for USDA Grading Service."

Ricotta cheeses covered by this specification shall conform to or exceed the following characteristics:

- A. **Flavor.** Whole milk or part-skim Ricotta has a pleasant, slightly sweet or caramel flavor. Whey or skim milk Ricotta (Ricotone) has a slightly sweet, bland flavor. All three types of Ricotta cheese may possess an acid flavor to a slight degree.
- B. **Body and Texture.** The cheese is soft and creamy and moist, but may contain the following to a slight degree: grainy and open. The cheese shall be free from gas.
- C. Color. Ricotta cheese using whey from uncolored cheese shall have a natural white to light cream, uniform bright color, and attractive sheen. Ricotta cheese using whey from colored cheese may be yellow-orange in color.
- D. **Finish and Appearance.** The cheese shall be free from mold under the wrapper or covering. The wrapper or covering shall be neat, but may be definitely wrinkled.
- E. **Packing and Packaging.** The packaging shall satisfactorily protect the cheese for its final use. The cheese shall be packaged in a properly sealed container to prevent entrance of air or drying of the cheese. The package may be sealed by any satisfactory type of closure. All packaging shall comply with the applicable labeling regulations of the Food and Drug Administration.

IV. Explanation of Terms.

A. With respect to flavor.

- 1. *Slight*. An attribute which is barely identifiable and present only to a small degree.
- 2. Acid. Sharp and puckery to the taste, characteristic of lactic or acetic acid.
- 3. *Caramel*. A burnt sugar flavor.
- B. With respect to body and texture.

- 1. *Slight*. An attribute which is barely identifiable and present only to a small degree.
- 2. *Definite*. An attribute which is readily identifiable and present to a substantial degree.
- 3. *Grainy*. Feels rough, dry, and sandy.
- 4. Gas. Gas holes of various sizes and may be scattered.
- 5. *Open*. Includes mechanical openings that are irregular in shape and are caused by variations in make procedure but are not the result of gas fermentation.

C. With respect to finish and appearance.

- 1. *Definite*. An attribute which is readily identifiable and present only to a substantial degree.
- 2. *Misshapen*. Deformed from its characteristic shape.
- 3. Wrinkled. Rough or uneven.
- 4. *Creamy*. Resembling cream.
- 5. *Sheen.* Showing a brightness or luster.

V. <u>Supplemental Information</u>.

- A. The buyer should specify when the product is to be inspected and a certificate issued by the Dairy Grading Branch.
- B. Ricotta cheese should be kept under refrigerated temperatures of between 35° F. and 40° F. (2° C. And 4° C.). Do not freeze. This product is ready for immediate distribution, and should be refrigerated until consumed.
- C. A shelf life of one or two weeks can be expected from Ricotta cheese.
- D. The buyer should specify when the package is to be evaluated according to the U.S. Standards for Condition of Food Containers.

The buyer should specify the type of Ricotta and packaging desired. E.