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## Cheese Consumption Continues To Rise

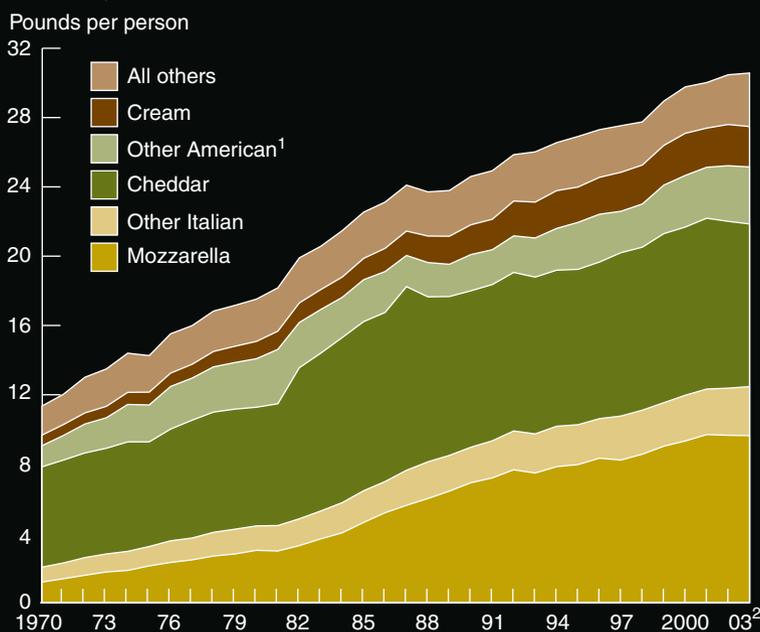
Demand for easy, time-saving strategies and cheese's utility in adding rich flavor to quick-serve meals (like soups, salads, pastas, sandwiches, cooked vegetables, eggs, and countless other dishes) are driving the rise in cheese consumption since 1970. The boom in eating out and ordering in parallels cheese's use as a major ingredient in food manufacturing (roughly 60 percent of our cheese now comes through these channels). For at-home consumption, resealable bags of shredded cheeses—including cheese blends tailored for use in Italian and Mexican recipes—and individually wrapped cheese sticks and baby Goudas have made cheese even more of a household staple.

Average U.S. cheese consumption nearly tripled between 1970 and 2003, from 11 pounds per person to 31 pounds. In 2000 (the latest year for which nutrient data are available), cheese contributed 26 percent of the calcium in the U.S. diet (up from 11 percent in 1970), 12 percent of the saturated fat (up from 5 percent in 1970), and 16 percent of the sodium (up from 6 percent in 1970).



PhotoDisc

### Americans now consume almost three times more cheese than they did in 1970



Note: Excludes full-skim American and cottage, pot, and baker's cheese.

<sup>1</sup>American cheese, other than Cheddar, includes Colby, Monterey Jack, and washed or stirred curd.

<sup>2</sup>Preliminary estimates.

Mozzarella—the main cheese in pizza—overtook Cheddar in 2002 to become America's favorite cheese. In 2003, Mozzarella consumption reached 9.6 pounds per person, more than 8 times the 1970 level. From 1970 to 2003, consumption of Cheddar cheese increased 62 percent to 9.4 pounds per capita, making it America's second favorite cheese. Cream cheese overtook Swiss in the late 1980s—in part due to an explosion in the popularity of bagels—to become America's third favorite cheese, at 2.3 pounds consumed per person in 2003 (nearly 4 times the 1970 level).

Will U.S. per capita cheese consumption continue growing as it has since 1970? Projections by ERS and others say that the rate may well slow, mostly because of the aging of the population—the elderly generally eat out less frequently and eat less pizza and cheeseburgers. Likely to continue increasing, however, are the diversity, quality, and availability of cheeses in both supermarkets and specialty shops dedicated to artisanal and farmhouse cheeses. *W*

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For more information, visit [www.ers.usda.gov/data/foodconsumption/](http://www.ers.usda.gov/data/foodconsumption/)

ERS annually calculates the amount of cheese and several hundred other foods available for consumption in the U.S. This series provides data back to 1909 for many commodities and is the only continuous source of data on food and nutrient availability in the U.S.