



WAYS OF MAKING MINAS ARTISANAL CHEESE



MINAS GERAIS - BRAZIL

WAYS OF MAKING
MINAS ARTISANAL CHEESE



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EXPERIENCES IN RECOGNITION OF THE IMMATERIAL CULTURAL HERITAGE IN BRAZIL

The beginning of the 21st century marks the consolidation, by heritage protection agencies, of cultural diversity as a value, par excellence, of humanity. Since the 1940s, Brazil, a country of continental dimensions, has been implementing actions to identify and understand cultural diversity as part of the public policy to protect and safeguard the values existing in our cultural bases, linked to the desires and needs of collectives. The starting point of this process was the National Folklore Commission, a collegiate created for the study and intellectual production of Brazilian popular culture.

At the end of the 1980s, the Brazilian Federal Constitution affirmed the understanding that cultural assets of an intangible nature constitute the cultural heritage of society because they are a reference to the identity, action and memory of its different forming groups. Safeguarding forms of expression, ways of creating, doing and living, through inventories and records, has become a duty of the Public Power, with the participation of communities, groups and relevant non-governmental organizations.

Faced with this new paradigm, the field of Brazilian heritage has sought new strategies for the identification, documentation, investigation, preservation, protection, promotion, valorization, transmission and revitalization of said heritage in its various aspects, based on the social processes that generate them and through the subjects that produce them. As a continuation of this work, Brazil instituted, through Federal Decree Number 3,551, of 2000, the Registry of Cultural Assets of Intangible Nature, a legal instrument for safeguarding, recognition and valuing Brazil's intangible cultural heritage.





Based on this legal instrument, 52 intangible cultural assets have already been recognized, related to Knowledge – knowledge and ways of doing rooted in the daily life of communities –, Celebrations – rituals and parties that mark the collective experience of work, religiosity, entertainment and other practices of social life –, Forms of Expression – literary, musical, plastic arts, scenic and playful manifestations – and Places – spaces where collective cultural practices are concentrated and reproduced.

In 2003, the UNESCO General Conference, at its 32nd session, promulgated the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, reaffirming the importance of cultural property of an intangible nature as a source of cultural diversity and a guarantee of sustainable development, as well as the common concern to safeguard the intangible cultural heritage of humanity. As of the Convention, the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage at the international level was strengthened with the representative list of the intangible cultural heritage of humanity, in which six assets of the Cultural Heritage of Brazil are inscribed: Kusiwa Art – Body Painting and Graphic Art Wajãpi, Frevo, Roda de Capoeira and Samba de Roda from the Recôncavo Baiano, as Forms of Expression; Círio de Nossa Senhora de Nazaré and the Cultural Complex of Bumba Meu Boi from Maranhão, as Celebrations.

Cultural assets of an intangible nature, already recognized or in the process of being recognized in Brazil, as they are directly linked to the dynamics of everyday life, represent the most authentic values of Brazilian nationality, as they express their own reason for existence for communities. This category of cultural goods proposes the recognition of cultural diversity from the collection of its creative process present in customs, habits and ways of being.



By bringing to the idea of cultural good the notion of cultural reference, associated with specific social groups, the Brazilian State assimilates the meanings of the symbolic present in the artifacts and practices of cultural making. The promotion of actions and plans for safeguarding is based on the recognition of resignification processes, fundamental for the continuity of the manifestations in accordance with the values attributed by the holders. Local values gain legitimacy, and the action of public policies assume a responsibility towards social groups directly linked to heritage preservation.

Having as its identity force the domains of social life, manifested in the intangible heritage, Brazil reinforces the importance of the Knowledge present in the food culture with the recognition of the Ways of Making Minas Artisanal Cheese. In 2008, through the Registry, the cultural asset was protected as a dynamic craft that has its own procedures, tools and forms of production, marketing and consumption and as a generator of sense of belonging, economic opportunities, self-esteem and collective improvement in the quality of life present in cultural territories in the state of Minas Gerais.

The cultural landscape formed in these territories shelters paths and roads that lead to the farm and the fields, relationships between rural producers and the environment, handicrafts and manual work, family work, rural buildings, cuisine and cooking, ways of receiving, hospitality, of consumption of artisanal cheese and sociability established around this consumption, rural language and identity discourses. This set of cultural manifestations was established from the processes of occupation of territories in which their own knowledge of management of natural resources in ecosystems and specific environments and models of economic survival of the population groups that inhabit these regions were affirmed.





MINAS GERAIS: RICHNESS AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY OF BRAZIL

The Brazilian territory is full of historical-cultural processes that express food cultures of social groups, transmitted by generations that are characterized by identity systems in each region. In the processes of continuity and transformation, it is observed the permanence of the use of certain products that, added to various elements, constitute traditional practices that structure social identities. The process of building these identities goes beyond the meanings of everyday life and makes elements of such importance that they are recognized as identity markers of collectives, a region or a country.

Minas Gerais, a Brazilian state identified by the gold and precious stones mines which exploration dates back to the 18th century, has much more than the beauty of the Baroque Mineiro expressed in its colonial centers, recognized as Cultural Heritage of Humanity: the cities of Ouro Preto, Congonhas and Diamantina. Traditional food practices, techniques for making food, the knowledge involved, the way of eating, the proximity of people, utensils, kitchens and landscapes are living cultural constructions present in the daily lives of these territories. In the set of manifestations related to food culture, the ways of making Minas Artisanal Cheese have special centrality.

Minas Artisanal Cheese is one of the oldest and most traditional Brazilian cheeses and, over the years, it has become a symbolic element capable of representing a collectivity and expressing an idea of belonging to certain cultural identities in the state of Minas Gerais and even in Brazil. For this reason, their ways of doing things are recognized as intangible cultural heritage of Minas Gerais (2002) and Brazil (2008).



MINAS ARTISANAL CHEESE: HISTORICAL AND IDENTITY PROCESS

Ancient food produced and appreciated in various societies, cheese has become a frequent part of eating habits. The different ways of making cheese were constituted by the need to transform an extremely perishable product, milk, into something more durable, cheese. Other symbolic elements were gradually associated and making and consuming cheese acquired different meanings.

In Minas Gerais, the production of cheese is historical and permanent, and the trajectory of manufacture and consumption began with the colonization process undertaken by Portugal from the 16th century onwards. The raising of cattle was crucial for the first attempts to expand and inland the Brazilian territory, which took place between the end of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th century. The movement towards the interior of the Colony, undertaken towards the hinterlands of Minas Gerais, was motivated by the interest in finding gold and other metals and precious stones. Gradually, the mining region witnessed a considerable population increase that led to the settlement of villages and farms, which contributed to the development of a livestock economy. Along with the expansion of economic and social relations, several food practices characteristic of the rural universe began to develop. These activities decisively influenced the food culture of Minas Gerais, giving rise to a unique and original cuisine that is still present today as one of the central elements in the constitution of the identity of Minas Gerais.



Tell me what you eat and I will tell you which god you worship, under which latitude you live, from which culture you were born and to which social group you belong to. Reading the kitchen is a fabulous journey into the awareness that societies have of themselves, into the vision they have of their identity.

Sophie Bessis

Cheese has become a food that has gradually consolidated itself as an icon of Minas Gerais cuisine. Its production processes were constituted as part of the food supply, in the midst of a diverse economy, in which agriculture, mining, handicrafts and the provision of various services were interdependent sources of resources. In the 19th century, cheese proved to be important to boost the Minas Gerais economy, being widely spread around farms in the region, becoming an everyday item on the Minas Gerais residents' tables and sold on sales shelves and markets. It was also already in circulation supplying Rio de Janeiro and other Brazilian states.

The techniques related to the ways of making Minas Artisanal Cheese are expressed as dimensions of sociability, meanings of everyday life, elements of sociocultural importance. Cheese gradually becomes a frequent food in eating habits and its production defines the way of handling the entire production process characteristic of the territories identified in Minas Gerais. Its consumption is expanded to use in traditional recipes, marking its presence in homes, parties and in the daily diet of the population.

Reports from foreign travelers who visited Minas Gerais during the 19th century express the socio-cultural importance of cheese present in the daily consumption of the population. According to some narratives, this good was always present on the shelves of markets, integrated with local and imported products of English origin. They also describe the frequency with which cheese was consumed by Minas Gerais families, as well as its presence in various recipes of local cuisine.

Other documents also reinforce the importance of cheese as a food and economic reference in Minas Gerais and other regions of Brazil. Such is the case of an inventory present in the Lisbon Library, where purchases for family consumption are listed, from July 1793 to October 1796. In this list of groceries, there are dozens of cheeses in 13 of the 40 items that make up the shopping list. They were purchased in large quantities at the same time, which presupposes the practice of consuming matured cheeses.

Assessing cultural production over time and as part of a historical process presupposes considering not only cultural diversity or the nature of representations, but mainly their continuity. The ways of making Minas Artisanal Cheese are constituted as a continuous process of transmission of knowledge whose production in some families is already in its fifth generation. As a practice of processing raw milk, it is a knowledge learned at home from an intimate relationship between producers and their environment



ACERVO APROCAN



ACERVO IEPHA

WAYS TO MAKE MINAS ARTISANAL CHEESE

Minas Artisanal Cheese, characterized by the use of raw milk in its manufacture, is the result of a knowledge and of a traditional way of making that follows the same principles since its origin. It has an eminently collective character in a long historical process of construction of identities and characteristic patterns of sociability, associated with the fundamental activity of the typical Minas Gerais farm, where cheese is the product that unites their actions, resulting in a process of dynamization of the economy of the mining towns. Making artisanal Minas Cheese from raw milk is a daily activity, performed 364 days a year. Its production is present in several regions of the state of Minas Gerais.

In the production regions already identified in Minas Gerais, the ways of making Minas Artisanal Cheese are relatively similar, with small adaptations related to the environment and tradition that, together with the conditions geographical and biological characteristics specific to each region, give artisanal cheeses specific traits, thus defining the flavor and unique characteristics of each cheese. In other words, to the physical-natural specificities of the regions, which provide typical pastures and the development of specific bacteria that multiply in each of these microclimates, there is added a specific way of making cheese: the handling of milk, curds, pasta, the pressing methods, the maturation time, which results in the elaboration of a unique food.

The labor used for the cheese production process varies according to the producer category. The small producer usually uses family labor for the entire production process, from the care of the herd, the milking process, which is usually manual, to the production of the cheese itself, to the sale. The average producer, on the other hand, uses both family labor and external labor to help. The large producer acts as a supervisor of the works and basically uses auxiliary labor, with the cowboy, who participates in the entire process, followed by one, two or three employees who have traditional knowledge and who will be responsible, effectively, for making the cheese.

¹ It is only on Good Friday that cheese is not made, as is customary and tradition. On that day, the milk is distributed to people in the neighborhood and destined for the dulce de leite or the greengrocers in the farm's kitchen.

² It should be noted that, in the Alto Paranaíba and Serra do Salitre regions, the "cheese maker" is the person who sells the cheese, the middleman, and not the person who makes it, who is simply "the cheese maker".



The cheesemaker, the one who makes the cheese, when not the farmer himself or his wife, helped by one or more children, must be someone preferably born and raised in the farm, who values the product, with a sense of responsibility assumed and valued as an essential worker in the production process. He is the closest employee, who deserves the most attentive care of the boss, and must have mastery of the farm and knowledge of the entire process, from taking care of the corral to the final stage of cheese production and marketing. Cheesemakers say that you don't learn to make cheese at school, but by watching others make it, doing it together. It is a know-how transmitted like this: from father to son, from mother to daughter, from master to apprentice, one day after another, throughout life, demarcating the figure of the cheesemaker as a keeper of this way of making it.

In the Serro region of Minas Gerais, making cheese is an almost exclusive male activity. In the regions of Alto Paranaíba and Serra da Canastra, women perform almost all stages of production, and in some municipalities, most of the labor employed in making the cheese is female. In most of these situations, she is the farmer's wife and shares responsibility for production with him.

The Minas Artisanal Cheese making process basically consists of milk coagulation, pressing, salting and maturation, using the following ingredients: raw cow's milk, coagulants and salt. All these raw materials can be produced on the farm, with the exception of salt, obtained in other regions. The process comprises the sequence of activities listed below.

1. OBTAINING THE MILK: MILKING, MILK STRAINING AND PACKAGING

Milking is the first step in the manufacture of cheese, where raw milk is obtained. When the process is carried out manually, the milked milk is taken to the cheese dairy, where, still outside, it is poured into a funnel and passed through a cloth filter, in order to remove any particles capable of contaminating the cheese.

When milking is mechanical, the milk goes straight from the hoses to the transferor and, when the desired amount is reached, the liquid is poured into a can, which is sent to the production room, where the coagulation process begins.





2. | ADDING RENNET AND DRIP

Coagulation of milk is the next step in cheese production. Ordinary rennet or homemade rennet, made from the dry and salted stomach of a calf or goatling, can be used. In the Canastra region, in ancient times, it was common to use coagulants made with segments of armadillos' stomachs. The rennet is the element that separates the mass from the whey, allowing the production of cheese. Subsequently, the drip is placed as a complementary form to the rennet.

The so-called “pingo” is the natural lactic ferment developed over time that gives the cheese specific microbiological characteristics, conditioned by the type of soil, climate and vegetation of each place, responsible for the pattern of consistency, color and specific flavor of the product. It is what makes a cheese from Serro different from a cheese from Canastra, or Serra do Salitre, or even Araxá. In this natural yeast, a whole set of lactic acid bacteria, specific to each region, is agglutinated, which constitutes the link between the past and the future. The drip is collected from the whey drained from the cheeses after salting, when the coarse salt deposited on one of the surfaces of the cheese neutralizes bacteria considered harmful for human consumption and guarantees the good conditions of the ingredient that will be used the next day for the composition of a new batch of cheeses.

As a rule, for coagulation, rennet is added in a proportion of 25 milliliters for every 100 liters of milk, and the drip in a proportion of ½ liter for 100 liters of milk. However, these measures are only an approximation, as the manufacture of cheese is directly related to climatic variations. When the weather is colder, it is necessary to use more water or rennet.

The name “pingo” (which translates to drip) comes from the verb to drip. It is a clear reference to the whey that, after undergoing fermentation, comes off the cheese and drips into another container. The dripped whey is collected and stored for use in the manufacture of other cheeses. It is, without a doubt, the main ingredient of artisanal cheese. In addition to conferring the characteristic flavor and aroma of this product, it also carries all the regional reference that gives the cheese its identity.



ACERVO APROCAN

3. | COAGULATION OF THE MILK, CUTTING THE DOUGH AND MIXING

After approximately 40 minutes of the addition of the rennet and the drip, the milk completes its coagulation and the dough is broken and stirred for about 3 to 5 minutes to separate the whey from the solid part.

4. | DRAINING AND PLACING THE DOUGH IN MOLDS, SMEARING AND MANUAL PRESSING

After about an hour, the dough precipitates and the first draining is carried out and then pressing or squeezing, an activity carried out manually. The objective at this stage is to remove as much of the whey as possible from the dough.

While in Canastra and Alto Paranaíba a fabric wrapped around the dough is used to extract the whey, thus having a cheese with less moisture, in Serro the pressing is done with your own hands directly into the molds. After working one side of the dough, turn the mold so that the other side is pressed.

There is also the custom of making the “merendeiro” (which translates to lunch box), especially in Serro, which is a small cheese, made with the dough left over from the pressing process, for consumption by the family and employees. Often, the “merendeiro” is a task for the apprentice, who, taking advantage of the insufficient dough to make a normal-sized cheese, has the opportunity to learn the technique.





5. | SAVING AND TURNING THE CHEESE

While still inside the molds, the cheese receives a layer of coarse salt on top and, at the end of the day, it is turned over so that the opposite side is salted.

6. | COLLECTION OF THE DRIP

After the second salting, at the end of the day, the producers collect the drip. The salt is intended to accentuate the flavor of the cheese and help maintain the good condition of the drip, which will be used the next day. The bacteria present in the drip will direct the fermentation of the next production. They are the ones that maintain the uniformity and specificity of the product. Whenever a producer has a problem with the quality of his cheese, he goes to the neighbor to get a new drop and rebuild the microbiota. This is what makes raw milk cheese a living food and its ways of making a process of constant attention to the details of the production environment.



7. REMOVING THE MOLD AND FINISHING

After approximately 48 hours, the cheese can be removed from the molds and the finishing process begins. This phase, known as grating or rasping, consists of preparing the cheese for better aesthetic presentation. In the Serro region, the entire surface of the cheese is scraped with a grater to make the surface homogeneous. When not sold in bakeries in the city, the grated is used in dishes and greengrocers to feed the residents of the farms. In farofas, breads and delicacies, the grated cheese is used in association with other farm products – such as cornmeal and manioc flour.

In the regions of Canastra and Serra do Salitre, the finishing is done with sandpaper, or else it is not done, leaving the yellow bark in its natural state.





8. | MATURATION

Next, the cheese goes to a space called the cheese room, where it rests on wooden boards to go through the maturation process, during which time it rests. This period can vary from 7 to 40 days, depending on the region, climatic conditions and the desired level of maturation. The maturation process is faster in periods of heat, as the action of microorganisms becomes more accelerated. In this space of time, the cheese significantly reduces its dimensions, reaching up to half of its initial size. Serro cheese, for example, is matured in 14 days and Canastra cheese completes its maturation in 21 days.

During the maturation process, the cheeses must be turned twice a day, once in the morning and once in the afternoon, so that the maturation occurs evenly. Aged cheese is free from harmful bacteria to humans and acquires ideal conditions for consumption. As with the aging of wines, the cheese gains more flavor with aging and its taste changes every day. A well-produced cheese improves its flavor and quality with aging, in addition to recovering the tradition of ancient times, when transport and marketing difficulties kept the cheese on the aging shelves for longer.

9. | HYGIENIZATION

Once the production process has been completed, the procedures for cleaning instruments, containers and the cheese dairy's premises are followed. The belief in the value of hygiene for obtaining a quality cheese attests to the convergence of the ways of making Minas Artisanal Cheese with the "good production practices" indicated by the State health legislation. As it is produced from raw milk, Minas Artisanal Cheese is a live food and is sensitive to any type of environmental variation, which can influence its taste, texture and balance.

In general, Minas cheese Artisanal has a cylindrical shape, with 15 to 16 centimeters in diameter and 4 to 8 centimeters in height. It has straight edges and flat faces, being aesthetically well worked after the maturation process, before being sent for consumption. In general, it weighs from 1.0 to 1.2 kg. Depending on the maturation time of each cheese, the rind is more or less yellowish. The consistency is soft, tending to harder, the more matured the cheese. The texture is smooth and may occasionally have small mechanical holes. The color is homogeneous cream-white.





PATRIMONIALIZATION AND SAFEGUARDING

Anchored in a living tradition in which permanence and transformations have interacted for centuries in the conformation of a knowledge in which the environment, techniques, representations are not dissociated, the ways of making Minas Artisanal Cheese have a significant patrimonial value, expressing feelings of belonging, bringing together identity elements of social groups in Minas Gerais and elucidating the cultural richness of Brazil.

However, these ways of doing, for a long time, did not find support in the sanitary legislation, which disregarded the differences and specific needs of craftsmanship. The motivation for the recognition of Queijo Minas Artisanal as an intangible cultural heritage arose precisely from the need to safeguard the traditional practice of making cheeses from raw milk, then threatened by a technical sanitary legislation that, when applying to the production of artisanal cheeses a set of rules created for industrial dairy products, hampered or even prevented their production and marketing. Another reason for the search for recognition was the need to characterize the ways of making Minas Artisanal Cheese from raw milk, in order to value traditional processes to the detriment of industrialized cheeses that called themselves “queijo minas”, promoting unfair competition.

As a result of the intense mobilization of civil society, public institutions and, above all, traditional producers/holders of knowledge in the face of the risk of extinction of the artisanal practice, the State Institute of Historic and Artistic Heritage of Minas Gerais (Iepha-MG) recognized as the first Intangible Good of the State's Cultural Heritage the “Way of Making Handmade Cheese from Serro”, registered in the Knowledge category. The protection, which took place in 2002, aimed to safeguard the characteristics related to the original recipe and the artisanal manufacturing process of Queijo do Serro, recognizing, protecting and stimulating its production, guaranteeing the sustainability of its producers and the local economy. In 2012, the Serro Region's (MG) Artisanal Way of Making Cheese Making Record completed 10 years and its protection was revalidated by Iepha-MG, having included four other cities in the area covered by the safeguard, which now has 11 municipalities. The re-



validation of the title of cultural heritage of the state of Minas Gerais demonstrates that the values built around this knowledge remain an important cultural reference for the Minas Gerais residents. The study for the second revalidation is already underway and its main objective is to update, in a collaborative way, the register of producers and producer associations of Minas Artisanal Cheese, expand the area covered by the protection and revalidate the safeguard plan.

The identification of the presence of ways of making Minas Artisanal Cheese in other parts of the state territory and the risks of loss of this important tradition led the Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional (Iphan), in 2008, to recognize the “Artisanal Way of Making Cheese”. “Queijo de Minas in the regions of Serro and Serras da Canastra and Salitre” as Cultural Heritage of Brazil, making its inscription in the Book of Record of Knowledge. Identified as traditional knowledge and a striking feature of the cultural identity of these regions, these ways of making, despite keeping regional specificities - as in the form of pressing the dough (with cloth or without cloth, for example), in the maturation times of the cheese and in the preponderance of male or female labor -, have as common points the use of raw milk, the addition of the drip and the use of predominantly family labor, through which knowledge is transmitted between generations, in a way that oral and practical. The product arising from these ways of doing is identified by the holders, by public and private institutions and by civil associations that deal with this universe. as Queijo Minas Artesanal (QMA), having marked in its name the inseparability between know-how and its product.

In addition to the product, however, the ways of making Minas Artisanal Cheese add a set of inseparable material and symbolic elements, that is, they can only fully exist and be understood in their relationships with each other. The act of making cheese and the knowledge that is specific to it are inseparable from the house, the property, the cheese factory with its utensils, animal husbandry, subsistence agriculture, production inputs, cooking and cooking, the values of cronyism, tolerance, neighborhood, hospitality, among many others. Minas Artisanal Cheese also originates from the complex interaction between soil, plant and climate and production methods and traditional raw materials, resulting in a unique food, impossible to be reproduced elsewhere. From this intimate relationship between culture and nature, in which the natural environment is appropriated and transformed by men, artisanal cheese production emerges as an activity inherent to everyday life and is also a defining feature of Minas Gerais cultural landscapes.



All this translates into a vast repertoire of traditional knowledge, including ways of marketing and consuming artisanal cheeses, and constitutes a striking feature of the cultural identity of each region, however, going beyond the territory of production. From the daily life on the farm to the home environment of the urban consumer, cheese is a basic and irreplaceable element of the rich food culture of Minas Gerais. Traditionally consumed by Minas Gerais residents of all social classes, artisanal cheeses from Minas, fresh or matured, are always present at the daily table of families and at parties, bars, sales, fairs and markets. An element of socialization and expression of hospitality, it serves to accompany coffee or cachaça in conversation circles and to celebrate the abundance and richness of Minas Gerais cuisine, in the accompaniment of sweets and jams and as an ingredient of countless delicacies, among which the incomparable cheese bread. Loaded with a sense of belonging and identity, these practices – making and eating cheese – also characterize the natives of Minas Gerais for other Brazilians, and can be considered one of the greatest expressions of being from Minas Gerais. Minas Artisanal Cheese, recognized and valued in several regions of Brazil, is one of the symbols of Minas Gerais cuisine.

It is in this sense that safeguarding the ways of making Minas Artisanal Cheese becomes relevant for the policy of preserving the culture and secular history of Minas Gerais and Brazil. Its recognition as Intangible Cultural Heritage has led to the consolidation of a collaborative network, led by heritage protection agencies and made up of producers/holders, civil society organizations, and public agencies that serve rural producers⁴ and that seek to strengthen and perpetuate the production, circulation and consumption of Minas Artisanal Cheese. Together, these institutions increasingly offer assistance to local producers, especially with the expansion of the notion and use of the so-called “good practices” that guarantee greater safety to the consumer.

The safeguard policies also enabled the emergence of sanitary regulations that deal with artisanal cheese production in a particular way, recognizing, finally, the importance of cheese making from raw milk in the social, economic and cultural context of the state. And, to meet the sanitary demands, without risk of losses to the traditional way of making cheese, producers are increasingly organizing themselves in associations and cooperatives. Together, traditional producers are strengthened and acquire the necessary conditions to

⁴ Instituto Mineiro de Agropecuária (IMA), Technical Assistance and Rural Extension Company of the State of Minas Gerais (Ema-ter-MG), Secretary of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply of Minas Gerais (Seapa) and Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply (Mapa)



meet the requirements of the legislation, defining safe hygienic standards and improving the biological quality of the product through the management of production and commercialization, as well as controlled sanitary practices. As a result, there is an increasing presence of artisanal cheese in the Brazilian consumer market, with all the guarantee and safety necessary for the quality and taste of a good product.

The organization of producers into associations is one of the requirements for granting the Geographical Indication, a collective trademark registration at the National Institute of Industrial Property (INPI), already won by the producers of Serro cheese and Canastra cheese. This instrument contributes to the establishment of product quality standards and broadens market prospects, providing access to rights and improvements, such as public funding for their production and marketing.

Contemporaneously permeated by issues of food safety, health certifications, traceability, denominations of origin, associations, national and international marketing, inspection, adequacy of legislation, among others, this tradition has welcomed, in recent decades, the introduction of a series of innovations, such as alterations to the materials used in its tools and production environments, the implementation of production and marketing management processes, the sanitary control of the herds and the mechanization of some of its processes (such as mechanical milking). These innovations, before necessarily posing a risk to their continuity, emerge as part of the very process of strengthening and affirming these ways of making cheese. The challenge, therefore, is the preservation of the cultural asset, assuring it of its traditional ways of doing it and the fulfillment of sanitary conditions that, in order to be effective, do not need to be incompatible with customary practices.

As a result of all this effort, Minas Artisanal Cheese has been obtaining more and more excellent results in national and international cheese competitions. As an example, we have the “Mondial du Fromage et des Produits Laitiers”, the main meeting point for those involved in the cheese and dairy sector. In the 2021 edition, Minas Artisanal Cheese won 40 medals, taking Brazil to second place in the competition, losing only to France, host of the event.

In addition, Minas Artisanal Cheese has proved to be an important product for rural tourism, with enormous growth potential. More and more, tourists seek the cheese-producing regions to discover and enjoy their beautiful landscapes, their typical food and the interac-



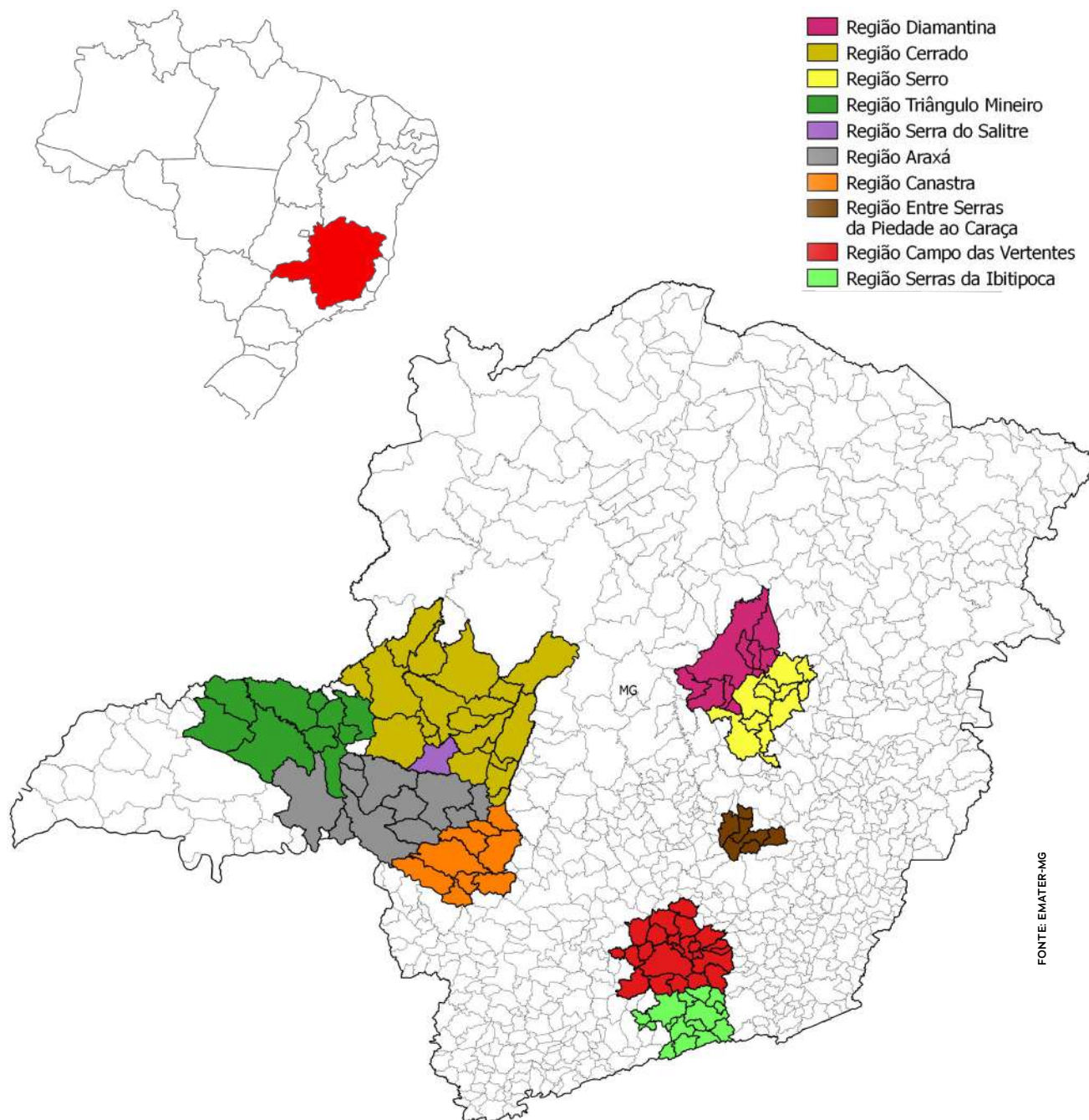
tion with their simple and hospitable people. The inclusion of the artisanal cheese production process and its entire history in tourist and gastronomic itineraries is contributing to the development of the activity in the state and to the generation of income.

In November 2021, the registration of the “Artisanal Way of Making Cheese from Minas in the Regions of Serro and Serras da Canastra and Salitre” was revalidated by the Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional (Iphan). For that, a study was developed that identified the continuity of the meanings and values of the “Craftsmanship of Making Cheese” for memory and collective identity, remaining as a great identity reference for the state of Minas Gerais and a mark of Brazilian cultural diversity. The expansion of the territorial scope of the safeguarded property was also approved, excluding the identification of producing regions and changing the title to “Ways of making Minas Artisanal Cheese”. The scope started to consider other regions that, through studies of the physical environment and production processes, were characterized as producers of Minas Artisanal Cheese, since in them a significant historical and cultural rooting of the way of making the cheese was identified. So far, the following producing regions of Minas Artisanal Cheese have been recognized: Diamantina, Araxá, Canastra, Campos das Vertentes, Cerrado, Serra do Salitre, Serra do Ibitipoca, Serro, Triângulo Mineiro and from Serra da Piedade to Caraça.

The traditional practice of artisanal production of raw milk cheese is present in a significant part of the state territory and demonstrates the strength of this tradition and its strong historical ballast that, not by chance, made the cheese the identity hallmark of Minas. The identification of artisanal cheese-producing territories demonstrates the commitment to continuous safeguard action, deepening knowledge about the protected property and strengthening the network of action in favor of the holders of this knowledge and its continuity, taking their demands and needs as a reference.

Strengthening exchanges between holders, public and private institutions and other actors that constitute this safeguard network existing in Brazil, putting it in dialogue with international agencies and bodies, is the next goal to be pursued in order to safeguard the conditions of existence of ways of making Minas Artisanal Cheese and of the knowledge transmission regimes that sustain it. The recognition of cultural assets in different spheres and the shared management in their preservation and promotion ensure the visibility, national and international, of the Brazilian cultural heritage, taking it as an important example of how culture and tradition can be instruments of development, strengthening of small local economies, democratizing income distribution and improving quality of life.

PRODUCING REGIONS OF MINAS ARTISANAL CHEESE



DATASHEET

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