

grate demand

Few bowls of pasta are complete without a sprinkle of grana, a category of hard, mature cheeses often used for grating ("grana" means grain in Italian). The most famous are Parmigiano-Reggiano and Grana Padano, but Pecorino Romano, which is not considered a grana cheese, is another popular option. Choosing the right cheese makes a difference to your dish, so we've got the fine points on each. We recommend a young cut—aged versions (generally labeled "stagionato") are best enjoyed on their own. Also, a finer grate will melt more evenly into your sauce.

grana padano

This popular cheese has been made in northern Italy's Po Valley, or Pianura Padana (where it gets its name), since the 12th century.

made from: Cow's milk

where: Po Valley

profile: Similar to Parmigiano-Reggiano, but paler, slightly less crumbly, milder and less complex. Markedly fragrant, its delicate flavor has a signature sweet nuttiness.

grate over: Farfalle with Chard and Grana Padano, p. 56.

pecorino romano

This ancient product has been made for two millennia and is said to have been a ration for Roman armies.

made from: Sheep's milk

where: Countryside surrounding Rome

profile: Less hard and dry than southern pecorino, but sports a bold, briny, pungent flavor and pronounced salty notes.

grate over: Cacio e pepe; try ours at Icimag.com/cacioepepe.

parmigiano-reggiano

Nicknamed the King of Cheeses, it is still made the same as when it was created 700 years ago.

made from: Cow's milk
where: Specific provinces in Emilia-Romagna

profile: Golden yellow, with creamier interior, and a pronounced nutty, spicy, salty tang.

grate over: Bucatini with Tomato Sauce and Meatballs, p. 53.

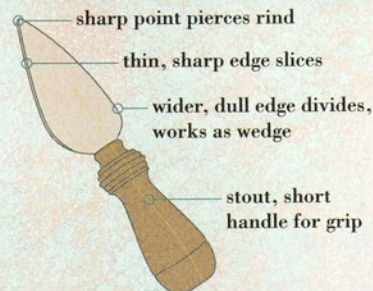


The store makes classic cuts, as well as ones flavored with ramps, beets and more.

Sfoglino Pasta Shop

We're enthralled by this Brooklyn-based producer of organic pasta extruded from traditional bronze dies (standard for artisanal pasta makers), which give noodles a sauce-gripping texture. In addition to 15 semolina and whole wheat pastas, Sfoglino also incorporates seasonal ingredients, such as ramps and squash, throughout the year. Some available online, with more options through their Pasta of the Month club. sfoglino.com.

in the cut



This knife, known in Italian as a tagliagrana, breaks down large wheels of Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese into chunks and wedges. It was designed specifically for grana cheeses (see left), which are traditionally cut by hand. For more about it, go to parmigianoreggiano.com.