



What to do about mold on cheese

We had a nice weekend getaway a while back and brought home some artisan cheese we found in a local shop. Today I saw some mold on it. Can I just cut the mold away or is the whole block of cheese unsafe?

It sounds like the cheese you're talking about is a hard cheese (not something soft, like cream cheese). If that's the case, you likely can still look forward to enjoying it.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service has a detailed fact sheet on mold online at <http://bit.ly/moldonfood>. Scroll down to the end and you'll find a chart that lists all sorts of foods and what to do if you find mold on them.

Fortunately, mold spores generally can't penetrate deeply into hard cheese. So, just cut the mold off, at least one inch around and below the mold spot. When you do, be sure to keep the knife away from the mold — you don't want to re-contaminate areas that haven't been affected. For the same reason, use fresh wrap to cover the cheese when done.

Soft cheeses aren't so lucky. If they get moldy, just throw them out.

As you probably know, some cheeses are actually made with mold. Roquefort, blue, Gorgonzola, Stilton, Brie and Camembert all use mold as part of the manufacturing process,

and obviously they're safe to eat. But other types of mold can invade, causing problems even on those cheeses. If you see mold that's not supposed to be there, follow the rules above: for hard cheese, cut around it by at least an inch; for soft cheese, pitch it.

You can prolong the life of many types of cheese by storing them in a cold (at least 0 degrees Fahrenheit) freezer instead of the refrigerator. Hard cheeses can be frozen for six to eight weeks without losing quality; processed cheese can be frozen for up to six months. Even Camembert, Roquefort and blue cheese can be frozen for up to three months. For details on how to properly freeze foods for maximum quality, see Ohio State University Extension's "Freezer Storage" fact sheet available to download at <http://go.osu.edu/FreezerStoragePDF>.

Although most types of mold prefer warmer temperatures, some types — as you've discovered firsthand — can grow in the refrigerator, too. To reduce the chance, clean the inside of your refrigerator every few months with a tablespoon of baking soda dissolved in a quart of water. Rinse with fresh water and dry. If you see visible mold on rubber casings, clean with a solution of a tablespoon of bleach in a quart of water.

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or filipic.3@osu.edu.



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