



Delightful Food Ideas

Parmigiano Reggiano Is More Than “Grate” Cheese

(NAPSA)—Mary Ann Esposito, star of the popular Italian cooking show “Ciao Italia!” on PBS, never ceases to be amazed at how many people don’t know about real parmesan cheese. “I tell them that the stuff in the green shaker box is not what they think it is,” says Esposito. “What they should be using is Parmigiano Reggiano, the king of Italian cheeses.

“It’s best to buy this sublime cheese by the wedge—about the amount you’d use in a month,” advises Esposito. When the cheese is grated as needed, it stays fresher and retains nuances of flavor and aroma. Also, in wedge form, you know what you’re buying because you can see the words Parmigiano Reggiano spelled out in pin dots on the rind.

Grated Parmigiano Reggiano is essential to many Italian dishes—lasagna and risotto, to name just two. Instead of seasoning steamed asparagus or green beans with butter, add a little olive oil, a squirt of lemon and a sprinkling of Parmigiano Reggiano. “A little goes a long way because it’s so flavorful,” says Esposito.

Parmigiano Reggiano is more than a grating cheese. With a vegetable peeler, make shards to garnish a salad or serve bite-size chunks with sliced fresh pear or rosy slices of Prosciutto di Parma.

What makes Parmigiano Reggiano unique is that, by law, it can be produced in only one place on earth—a designated region in Northern Italy—using the same methods that have been used there for the past 900 years. The cows are fed a natural diet of grass and hay that results in superb milk. Highly skilled cheese makers oversee the making of the cheese, which is lovingly aged for



Dates stuffed with Parmigiano Reggiano and pecans are elegantly simple meal starters or finishers.

about 24 months. “No assembly-line production here,” says Esposito. “To see the making of Parmigiano Reggiano is a wondrous thing. There’s so much tradition and symbolism associated with it.”

Here is an easy and delicious party idea from Mary Ann Esposito.

Parmigiano Reggiano and Pecan-Stuffed Dates

16 large pitted dates
2 ounces Parmigiano Reggiano cheese
16 pecan halves

Slit dates in half lengthwise. With the tip of a knife, gently pry off thin pieces of the cheese from the chunk, just slightly larger than the pecan halves. Slip a piece of cheese and a pecan half into each date. Arrange on a platter and garnish with parsley, if desired.

Yield: 16 stuffed dates

For more information, visit www.parmigiano-reggiano.it.