

## On the trail of ... Cheshire's cheese

Cheshire is home to the country's oldest named cheese, in fact, it was first recorded in Roman times. And Cheshire cheese has been one of our favourites since the reign of Elizabeth I – irresistibly crumbly, creamy and salty. But these days Cheshire isn't only known for the county's signature cheese. Today's local artisans draw on influences from around the globe. Take a tour to find out more.

Why is salt essential to cheese? It's one of the questions that will be answered at "A Brine Romance: Salt and Food", a new exhibition this autumn at **Lion Salt Works** near Northwich (20 October to January 2021). Find out why the mineral – of which this county has the country's largest reserves – is crucial to the great taste of cheese at this fun and fascinating museum set in one of the world's last inland open-pan salt works. Lion Salt Works, Ollershaw Lane, Marston, Northwich, Cheshire CW9 6ES (01606 275066, <http://lionsaltworks.westcheshiremuseums.co.uk>)

The Bourne family has been making cheese since 1750 using traditional techniques passed down over six generations. Oak smoked, cloth bound and even blue Cheshire are among the types crafted by hand at **HS Bourne** near Malpas from milk from the farm's herd of Friesians. Stock up on Bourne cheeses at local farmers' markets in Nantwich, Tarporley, Knutsford, Sandbach, Macclesfield and Rode Hall. You can even book to see how the cheese is made at the Bourne's dairy, although visits are currently suspended because of the pandemic. [HS Bourne](http://www.hsbourne.co.uk), The Bank, Malpas, Cheshire SY14 7AL (01948 770214, [www.hsbourne.co.uk](http://www.hsbourne.co.uk)).

It's only fitting that one of Chester's best-loved independent shops is dedicated to selling cheese. **The Cheese Shop** was founded more than 30 years ago by Carole Faulkner, a farmer's daughter and former cheesemaker who focuses on British cheeses from small-scale producers that she personally visits. These specially selected cheeses are carefully stored in the cellar of this small shop close to the city wall, ensuring a constant supply of delectable offerings are available to buy. The Cheese Shop, 116 Northgate Street, Chester CH1 2HT (01244 346240).

Churns, vats, curd mills and cheese presses are among artefacts that offer a visual guide to centuries of local cheese-making at the **Cheese Room in Nantwich Museum**. What gives the cheese its salty tang, is it through salting or due to the brine springs beneath the local pastures grazed by cows? This is the place to find out the answers to these questions and more. [Nantwich Museum](http://www.nantwichmuseum.org.uk), Pillory Street, Nantwich, Cheshire CW5 5BQ (01270 627104, [www.nantwichmuseum.org.uk](http://www.nantwichmuseum.org.uk)).

We're so dedicated to the art of making cheese in Cheshire, we're home to one of Britain's leading institutions for teaching all things dairy. The next generation of cheesemakers learn their craft at **Reaseheath College** near Nantwich and the industry also comes here to keep knowledge and skills updated. But you don't have to be a full-time student or corporate player to go deeper into the science because budding cheesemakers can sign up for short courses, too. Reaseheath College, Nantwich, Cheshire CW5 6DF (01270 625131, [www.reaseheath.ac.uk](http://www.reaseheath.ac.uk)).

*Please check the websites for the latest on opening times, access and Covid-19 safety measures.*