

Padano is," says the Consorzio's Grandjacquet. He says sampling the product is the best way to show them.

Di Palo could not agree more. "You must give the people a taste. The taste is where it sells. The aroma, the flavor — this is where you get the true identification of the cheese."

Once customers have tried Grana Padano, it helps to let them know about its "hidden" nutritional qualities. It takes more than 16 quarts of milk to make just over two pounds of Grana Padano cheese. This is

where it gets its rich flavor. It also means that while it is lower in fat than many other cheeses, it is also high in protein and calcium. Enzymes that develop during the production process also make it easier to digest. All of this makes it a great choice for the health-conscious customer.

"One nice thing about Grana Padano — pound for pound, it has the same protein as meat," notes Grandjacquet.

And while the nutritional content makes it great for those watching their health, the

## Enjoying Grana Padano

**L**ou Di Palo, co-owner of the specialty shop Di Palo's Fine Foods in New York's Little Italy, recommends serving freshly cut Grana Padano in chunks as a table cheese. Then, as the cut cheese begins to form a rind, he recommends grating the hard outside to use in recipes. The inside will still remain fresh, and therefore good on its own.

Because of its mild flavor, Grana Padano is a versatile cheese. It pairs well with fruit, such as apples and pears, or slices of aged meats. A crisp white wine will complement the cheese nicely.

Other recommendations include:

Stir grated Grana Padano into eggs. "It's a great breakfast cheese," says Di Palo. "In omelets, it's just fantastic."

Add shavings to tossed salads to add crunch and flavor. "It doesn't get soggy in the vinegar and oil," Di Palo notes.

Make a fancy snack or appetizer by grating Grana Padano. Place small piles of the cheese in a hot nonstick skillet to make crunchy cheese crisps as a high-flavor alternative to potato chips.

Stir grated Grana Padano into risotto. It will not overwhelm the subtle flavors the way Parmigiano-Reggiano can.

Serve grated Grana Padano as a topping for pasta or steamed vegetables.

Add Grana Padano to some of your deli products, such as prepared macaroni and cheese or party platters, to encourage customers to try it on their own. **DB**

price (averaging about \$10 a pound, says Di Palo) makes it great for customers watching their budget.

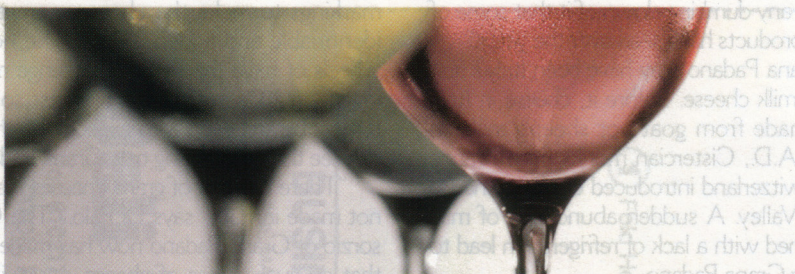
"Twice as much Grana Padano as Parmigiano is made each year," says Di Palo. Italy produces about 4 million 75-pound wheels of Grana Padano a year, making it the most consumed PDO cheese in the world.

"It is a cheese that's sold very, very reasonably, in my opinion," says Di Palo. "You're getting a cheese that's aged anywhere from 16 to 30 months. A cheese that's higher in protein and lower in fat, has the ability to satisfy your palate without overindulging, is great on the table as well as in recipes and is guaranteed to be personally inspected by an independent inspector from the Consorzio — what better true value can you get?"

The Consortium for the Protection of Grana Padano Cheese offers training, display kits and recipe booklets for use in stores. **DB**

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