# Young French consumers shift from traditional cheeses to milder and plant-based alternatives



The evolving landscape of cheese consumption in France reveals a surprising shift among younger generations, particularly noted by cheese retailers outside of France. Reports indicate that young French consumers are increasingly turning away from traditional, pungent cheeses in favour of milder options, a trend that has raised eyebrows among local cheesemakers. At the Chepstow Garden Centre, cheese supervisor James Bailey expressed surprise at this trend but reaffirmed the continued popularity of strong cheeses, such as Stinking Bishop, among local youth. He described the situation as partly influenced by a rising fondness for processed cheese products, which he termed “yukky plastic-style burger cheese.”

This trend among French Generation Z consumers has been substantiated by research from the Académie Phormos, which indicates a declining interest in traditional cheesy varieties among younger adults. In contrast, at Chepstow, Bailey noted that business has not suffered, as "stinky" cheeses remain a staple for his young clientele. The juxtaposition of the two markets starkly highlights cultural differences; while the French are moving toward milder flavours, preferences among British consumers appear to remain more traditional.

Despite these declining sales, the overall cheese market in France is projected to thrive. A Statista report estimates that the French cheese market will generate approximately €10.30 billion by 2024, with an average annual growth rate of 4.54% anticipated from 2024 to 2029. This growth is largely attributed to a rising demand for artisanal and specialty cheeses, alongside the increasing popularity of plant-based cheese alternatives. In fact, a study by Mintel noted that approximately 20% of French consumers now use cheese as a meat alternative, with vegetarians and flexitarians driving demand for innovative cheese products that appeal to younger consumers.

Moreover, changing eating habits among the French population are contributing to the decline in traditional cheese consumption. A NielsenIQ study reveals that only 35% of the French population regularly consumes cheese as a separate course prior to dessert; instead, cheese is increasingly incorporated into meals as an ingredient. This shift underscores a broader trend towards integrating cheese within diverse culinary practices rather than enjoying it in its traditional form.

Interestingly, as this shift unfolds in France, research commissioned by Tate & Lyle highlights that younger generations across Europe are consuming more dairy than they did three years ago. Specifically, 34% of individuals aged 18-35 now report increased dairy consumption, with a significant percentage expressing interest in low-fat and low-sugar alternatives. This seems to indicate a nuanced relationship with dairy products, where young consumers may not be rejecting cheese outright but are instead seeking versions that align with contemporary dietary preferences.

In summary, while traditional French cheese faces challenges from changing tastes among the youth, the market as a whole is exhibiting resilience. The contrasting experiences between French youth and their British counterparts in Chepstow reveal the complexities of evolving food cultures and preferences in Europe today.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.southwalesargus.co.uk/news/25203325.chepstow-cheese-shop-says-youths-still-stinky-cheeses/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.mintel.com/insights/food-and-drink/in-france-cheese-adds-taste-to-flexitarian-meals/> - A 2017 Mintel report highlights that over 20% of French consumers use cheese as a meat alternative, with 25% of those aged 25-34 incorporating more vegetarian foods into their diet. This trend presents opportunities for cheese manufacturers to introduce cheese-based meat alternatives to appeal to younger consumers.
3. <https://fr.statista.com/outlook/cmo/food/dairy-products-eggs/cheese/france> - According to Statista, the French cheese market is expected to generate €10.30 billion in revenue in 2024, with a projected annual growth rate of 4.54% from 2024 to 2029. This growth is driven by increasing demand for artisanal and specialty cheeses, as well as plant-based cheese alternatives.
4. <https://www.culinary-heritage.com/post/the-decline-of-france-s-traditional-cheese-board-culture> - A study by NielsenIQ reveals that only 35% of the French population regularly consumes cheese as a separate course before dessert. Instead, cheese is increasingly used as an ingredient in meals, reflecting changing dietary habits and the influence of international cuisines.
5. <https://www.grocerygazette.co.uk/2022/04/28/dairy-rise-younger-generation/> - Research commissioned by Tate & Lyle indicates that a third of 18-25-year-olds across Europe are consuming more dairy than they were three years ago. The study also found that 77% of 18-35-year-olds are open to eating more dairy products if they could try options with less fat, sugar, and allergens.
6. <https://www.perishablenews.com/dairy/dairy-trends-in-europe-the-younger-generation-eat-more-dairy-now-than-3-years-ago/> - A survey by Tate & Lyle across Europe found that 34% of 18-35-year-olds are consuming more dairy than three years ago. The study also highlighted that 77% of this age group would consider eating more dairy products if they could try options with less fat, sugar, and allergens.
7. <https://www.euronews.com/culture/2024/07/10/frances-passion-for-cheese-hasnt-changed-but-their-eating-habits-have> - An article by Euronews discusses how traditional French cheese consumption habits are evolving. While cheese remains a staple, its consumption patterns are changing, with cheese being used more as an ingredient in meals rather than as a separate course before dessert.