

DAMA SQUEAKY CHEESE

THE BASICS

MAKE:	Hard
SUB MAKE:	Cheeses which acidify in the vat
POST-MAKE:	Flavoured or Smoked, Wrapped, Rolled or Processed
SUB POST-MAKE:	Other Wrapped
TYPICAL AGE PROFILE:	One day to six months
APPROXIMATE WEIGHT(S):	200g; 800g
DIMENSIONS:	200g: 6cm (W) 7cm (L), 200g: 4cm
GEOGRAPHICAL ORIGIN:	Made in Yorkshire, England, but based on Middle Eastern Halloumi-style cheeses
PROTECTED STATUS:	N/A
SPECIES OF MILKING ANIMAL:	Cow
BREED OF COW:	N/A
RAW/PASTEURISED MILK:	Pasteurised
VEGETARIAN/ANIMAL RENNET:	Vegetarian
COMMONLY ENCOUNTERED VARIATIONS:	The company makes many different versions, including one with raw sheep's milk, one with raw goat's milk version and Squeaky Cheese with different flavours, including mint, rosemary, za'atar, onion seeds, chilli and smoked.



THE STORY

Razan Alsous and her husband Raghid Sandouk came to the UK in 2012 with their three young children as refugees, after fleeing the civil war in Syria. Despite having a pharmacy degree and a scientific background, Alsous' lack of references and work history in the UK made it difficult for her to find a job in her new home of Yorkshire.

So in 2014 she set about making the Halloumi-style cheeses she knew and loved back in Syria with a £2,500 loan from the local enterprise agency, naming the new business Yorkshire Dama Cheese.

Based in Sowerby Bridge, West Yorkshire, the company makes a range of Halloumi-style cheeses, which are branded Squeaky Cheese because of the sound they make when eaten. The name Halloumi cannot be used because it is protected by a PDO, specifying it must be made in Cyprus.

Yorkshire Dama's original flagship cheese is made with pasteurised cow's milk from a local farm, although sheep, goat and flavoured versions are also made. Calcium chloride is added to the milk (to aid coagulation), which is warmed to 35°C and coagulated with microbial rennet (no starter cultures are used). The curd is cut into 1.5cm cubes and scalded at 40-42°C for five minutes, before draining on tables. The whey collects in a vat beneath, which is reheated to make ricotta.

The drained curd is pressed in rectangular moulds and then cooked in the hot curd for 45 minutes at 95°C. The cheese is then dry salted and brined for eight hours, before being vacuum-packed in 200g or 800g blocks.

THE CHARACTER

Squeaky Cheese has no rind, while the paste is pale ivory in colour. It has a soft, elastic texture and offers a milky flavour with salty and sweet notes. There is a noticeable squeak when you eat the cheese, especially when it is grilled.

PERFECT PARTNERS:

Like Halloumi, Squeaky Cheese does not melt when grilled, barbecued or dry fried, taking on a golden brown colour and sweet flavour. But Alsous also often eats it uncooked, grating the fresh cheese over pasta or serving slices with tomatoes and cucumber. Alternatively, cut into cubes and bake stuffed into mushrooms or peppers. She recommends rinsing the cheese in cold or warm water to reduce the salt content to suit personal tastes.
