
Feta cheese — Specification



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Feta cheese — Specification

1 Scope

This African Standard specifies the requirements, sampling and test methods for Feta cheese intended for direct human consumption or for further processing.

2 Normative references

The following standards are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes requirements of this Standard. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced standard (including any amendments) shall be applied.

ARS 53, General Principles of Food Hygiene — Code of practice

ARS 56, *Labelling of Prepackaged Foods*

ARS 1034, *Dairy industry — Glossary of terms*

ARS 1036, *Code of Hygienic Practice for Milk and Milk Products*

CXS 192, *General Standard for Food Additives*

CXS 193, *General Standard for Contaminants and Toxins in Food and Feed*

ISO 707, *Milk and milk products — Guidance on sampling*

ISO 6579-1, *Microbiology of the food chain — Horizontal method for the detection, enumeration and serotyping of Salmonella — Part 1: Detection of Salmonella spp.*

ISO 11290-1, *Microbiology of the food chain — Horizontal method for the detection and enumeration of Listeria monocytogenes and of Listeria spp. — Part 1: Detection method*

ISO 16649-1, *Microbiology of food and animal feeding stuffs — Horizontal method for the enumeration of beta-glucuronidase-positive Escherichia coli — Part 1: Colony-count technique at 44 degrees C using membranes and 5-bromo-4-chloro-3-indolyl beta-D-glucuronide*

ISO 6888-1, *Microbiology of the food chain — Horizontal method for the enumeration of coagulase-positive staphylococci (Staphylococcus aureus and other species) — Part 1: Method using Baird-Parker agar medium*

ISO 14501, *Milk and milk powder — Determination of aflatoxin M1 content — Clean-up by immunoaffinity chromatography and determination by high-performance liquid chromatography*

ISO 23319, *Cheese and processed cheese products- Determination of fat content- Gravimetric method (Reference method)*

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ARS 1034 and the following shall apply.

Feta cheese

soft cheese obtained by coagulating of pasteurized fresh, concentrated, dried milk or combination of its fresh products, dried and pasteurized or treated by any equivalent heat-treatments to pasteurization. It could be packed with brine or not.

4 Requirements

4.1 Raw materials

Raw materials and ingredients used shall comply with relevant standards.

4.1.1 Essential raw materials

- a) Cow milk, buffalo milk, or their mixtures, and products obtained from these milks.
- b) Starter cultures of harmless lactic acid and/ or flavour producing bacteria and cultures of other harmless microorganisms.
- c) Rennet or other safe and suitable coagulating enzymes.
- d) Sodium chloride and potassium chloride or calcium chloride as a salt substitute.
- e) Potable water.
- f) Safe and suitable enzymes to enhance the ripening process.

4.1.2 Optional raw materials

- a) Safe and suitable processing aids.
- b) Herbs and Spices.
- c) Rice, corn and potato, flours and starches: Notwithstanding the provisions in ARS 1073, these substances can be used in the same function as anti-caking agents for treatment of the surface of cut, sliced, and shredded products only, provided they are added only in amounts functionally necessary as governed by Good Manufacturing Practice.

4.2 General requirements

Feta cheese shall:

- a) have a white or yellowish white colour,
- b) have homogeneous texture, not spongy, which crumples or spreads on slicing,
- c) contain few irregular small or no holes,
- d) have compact texture suitable for slicing, with no rind,
- e) have tangy and salty flavour, and
- f) be free from dirt, foreign matter and without off- flavours and textural defects.

4.3 Compositional requirements for Feta cheese

Feta cheese shall meet the compositional requirements given in Table 1 when tested in accordance with the test methods specified therein. Feta cheese may be classified as identified in Table 1 and meet the compositional requirements, as shown.

Table 1 — Compositional requirements for Feta cheese

Parameter	Cheese category			Test method
	Full fat	Medium fat	Low fat	
Milk fat in dry matter % m/m	Not less than 40	Equal to or above 20 but less than 30	Equal to or above 10 but less than 20	ISO 23319
Moisture % (m/m)	62	65	65	

5 Food Additives

Food additives may be used in Feta cheese in accordance with CXS 192.– Category 01.6.2 (Ripened cheese).

6 Contaminants

6.1 Heavy metals

The products covered by this African Standard shall comply with those maximum limits for metal contaminants specified in CXS 193.

6.2 Aflatoxins

When tested in accordance with ISO 14501, the level of aflatoxin M₁ shall not exceed 0.50 µg/kg.

6.3 Pesticides residues

Pesticide residue limits shall be in accordance with limits set by the Codex Alimentarius Commission for the product.

6.4 Veterinary drug residues

Veterinary drug residue limits shall be in accordance with limits set by the Codex Alimentarius Commission for the product.

7 Hygiene

The products covered by this African Standard shall be produced, prepared and handled in accordance with the provisions of the appropriate sections of ARS 53 and ARS 1036.

Feta cheese shall be free from microorganisms and products originating from microorganisms in amounts which may represent a hazard to human health

The Feta cheese shall comply with microbiological limits given in Table 2 when tested in accordance with the test methods specified therein

Table 2 — Microbiological limits for Feta cheese

Food category	Micro-organisms	Sampling plan		Limits		Test method reference	Stage of analysis
		n	c	m	M		
Un-ripened cheese	<i>Salmonella</i> spp	5	0	Absence in 25 g		ISO 6579-1	On the market during the shelf-life and during handling
	<i>Listeria monocytogenes</i>	5	0	Absence in 25 g		ISO 11290-1	On the market during the shelf-life
	<i>Coagulase-positive staphylococci</i>	5	2	10 cfu/g	10 ² cfu/g	ISO 6888-1	End of the production process
	<i>Escherichia Coli</i>	5	1	10 ² cfu/g	10 ³ cfu/g	ISO 16649-1	On the market during the shelf-life
Un-ripened brined cheese	<i>Escherichia Coli</i>	5	0	absent		ISO 16649-2	On the market during the shelf-life

n = number of units comprising the sample
c = number of sample units giving values between m and M
m= The level of the microbiological criterion required in the product
M= Value or level of microbial limit not to be reached or greater than in any unit of the sample

8 Packaging

Cheese shall be packaged in suitable food grade containers which will safeguard the hygienic, nutritional, technological, and organoleptic qualities of the product during dispatch, transport and use of the product until the end of its shelf life.

9 Labelling

In addition to the provisions of ARS 56 and ARS 1034, the following specific provisions apply:

9.1 Name of the food

The name of the food shall be Feta cheese, provided that the product is in conformity with this standard. Where customary in the country of retail sale, alternative spelling may be used.

The use of the name is an option that may be chosen only if the cheese complies with this standard. Where the name is not used for a cheese that complies with this standard, the naming provisions of ARS 1073 can be used.

9.2 Declaration of milk fat content

The milk fat content shall be declared in a manner found acceptable in the country of sale to the final consumer, either (i) as a percentage by mass, (ii) as a percentage of fat in dry matter, or (iii) in grams per serving as quantified in the label provided that the number of servings is stated.

10 Methods of sampling

For checking the compliance with this standard, the methods of sampling contained in ISO 707, shall be used.

Bibliography

ES 1008-12 Soft cheese- Part 12 (Feta-cheese)