

S1 Table. Main chemical composition* of Fiore Sardo, Pecorino Siciliano and Pecorino Toscano cheeses.

	Control[§]	A	D	G	B	E	H	C	F	I
Fiore Sardo										
Mean pH ± SD	5.78±0.4 ^d	5.83±0.3 ^b	5.85±0.4 ^a	5.80±0.2 ^c	5.81±0.2 ^c	5.80±0.1 ^c	5.81±0.3 ^b	5.80±0.1 ^c	5.83±0.2 ^b	5.82±0.1 ^c
Mean moisture content (%) ± SD	19.2±1.4 ^{b-c}	12.1±1.2 ^g	18.2±1.2 ^c	12.0 ±1.1 ^f	12.5±1.3 ^f	25.2±1.3 ^a	12.0±1.3 ^f	13.0±1.2 ^e	19.2±1.1 ^b	13.4 ± 1.4 ^d
Mean fat content (%) ± SD	27.5±1.6 ^b	28.2±1.3 ^a	26.5 ±1.1 ^c	27.8 ±1.4 ^b	28.1±1.2 ^a	25.1±1.0 ^d	28.5±1.2 ^a	27.9±1.4 ^b	27. ±1.2 ^{b-C}	28.3±1.3 ^a
Mean protein content (%) ± SD	26.1±1.4 ^c	26.9±1.1 ^b	25.1±1.1 ^d	27.0±1.2 ^a	27.2±1.0 ^a	24.4±1.3 ^e	26.7±1.3 ^b	26.8±1.2 ^b	25.0±1.2 ^d	27.1±1.2 ^a
Mean NaCl content (%) ± SD	4.2±0.04 ^d	4.5±0.01 ^b	4.0±0.04 ^d	4.6±0.01 ^a	4.4±0.02 ^c	4.1±0.05 ^e	4.5±0.02 ^b	4.6±0.03 ^a	3.9±0.04 ^f	4.4±0.02 ^c
Pecorino Siciliano										
Mean pH ± SD	5.73±0. 4 ^{c-d}	5.72±0.1 ^d	5.74±0.2 ^{c-d}	5.70±0.2 ^d	5.71±0.2 ^d	5.9±0.3 ^a	5.73±0.2 ^{c-D}	5.81±0.4 ^b	5.75±0.2 ^c	5.79±0.3 ^c
Mean moisture content (%) ± SD	18.8±1.3 ^d	15.2±1.0 ^e	22.0±1.2 ^c	15.5±1.4 ^e	14.6±1.2 ^f	25.0±1.1 ^a	15.3±1.2d ^e	14.7±1.3 ^f	23.0±0.9 ^b	14.9±1.1 ^f
Mean fat content (%) ± SD	18.4±1.4 ^c	19. ±0.9 ^{a-B}	18.7±1.2 ^c	19.0±0.9 ^b	19.7±1.1 ^a	17.3±1.1 ^d	19.1±0.7 ^b	19.9±1.2 ^a	17.1±1.4 ^d	19.4±1.4 ^{a-b}

Mean protein content (%) \pm SD	30.6 \pm 1.9 ^{cd}	31.5 \pm 1.8 ^b	28.9 \pm 1.0 ^{ef}	31.4 \pm 1.1 ^b	30.4 \pm 1.2 ^d	28.1 \pm 1.7 ^f	31.1 \pm 1.2 ^c	30.2 \pm 1.1 ^d	29.6 \pm 1.2 ^e	31.9 \pm 1.3 ^a
Mean NaCl content (%) \pm SD	3.8 \pm 0.02 ^e	4.3 \pm 0.01 ^c	3.6 \pm 0.04 ^f	3.9 \pm 0.01 ^d	3.9 \pm 0.03 ^d	3.5 \pm 0.05 ^f	4.5 \pm 0.03 ^a	4.3 \pm 0.02 ^c	3.3 \pm 0.02 ^g	4.4 \pm 0.01 ^b
Pecorino Toscano										
Mean pH \pm SD	5.81 \pm 0.3 ^b	6.01 \pm 0.2 ^a	6.03 \pm 0.1 ^a	6.04 \pm 0.2 ^a	5.6 \pm 0.1 ^d	5.51 \pm 0.3 ^e	5.7 \pm 0.2 ^c	5.8 \pm 0.2 ^b	5.71 \pm 0.2 ^c	5.6 \pm 0.2 ^d
Mean moisture content (%) \pm SD	18.5 \pm 1.4 ^{b-c}	13.1 \pm 1.2 ^{d-e}	18.0 \pm 1.3 ^b	12.1 \pm 11 ^e	12.5 \pm 1.1 ^e	20 \pm 1.2 ^a	13.7 \pm 1.3 ^d	13.4 \pm 1.2 ^{d-E}	17.0 \pm 1.0 ^c	13.4 \pm 1.2 ^d
Mean fat content (%) \pm SD	19.2 \pm 1.8 ^c	20.1 \pm 1.4 ^b	18.4 \pm 1.3 ^d	20.4 \pm 1.4 ^b	20.4 \pm 1.4 ^b	17.9 \pm 1.4 ^e	21.0 \pm 1.5 ^a	20.0 \pm 1.2 ^b	18.6 \pm 1.5 ^d	20.4 \pm 1.0 ^b
Mean protein content (%) \pm SD	28.4 \pm 1.7 ^d	29.1 \pm 1.0 ^c	28.9 \pm 1.1 ^c	29.4 \pm 1.2 ^b	29.7 \pm 0.9 ^a	28.4 \pm 1.0 ^d	29.3 \pm 0.9 ^b	29.0 \pm 1.2 ^c	28.7 \pm 1.3 ^d	29.6 \pm 0.8 ^a
Mean NaCl content (%) \pm SD	3.2 \pm 0.07 _h	4.0 \pm 0.02 ^d	3.8 \pm 0.02 ^e	4.3 \pm 0.02 ^d	4.1 \pm 0.03 ^c	3.4 \pm 0.03 ^g	4.4 \pm 0.02 ^a	4.2 \pm 0.01 ^b	3.7 \pm 0.04 ^f	4.1 \pm 0.01 ^c

Data in the same column with different superscript letters (a-h) are significantly different (P<0.05).

*Mean values \pm standard deviations for three batches of each type of cheese, analysed in duplicate.

[§]Slice of each cheese was cut into nine sub-blocks identified by the letters A - I. Sub-blocks A, D, and G, and sub-blocks C, F and I were collected from top and bottom surface region, respectively, whereas sub-blocks B and H from inner side region, and sub-block E from the core. The whole slice was the control. Further details were reported in the Material and Methods and in Fig. 1.