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## FATTY ACID PROFILE IN SERRA DA ESTRELA CHEESE: AN OVERVIEW

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Milk and dairy products are of major importance in the human diet, since they are an excellent source of well-balanced nutrients which are consumed in large amounts and are easy to manufacture. Most cheeses present in the market are made from cow's milk, with ewe's and goat's cheeses being considered delicacies derived from the unavailability of goat's and ewe's milk in certain periods of the year, proleaving to a final product with high prices that consumers tend to value given the quality of the final products. Serra Estrela (SE) cheese, a traditional variety manufactured in the center region of Portugal, is part of the national ancient cultural heritage. Made from raw sheep milk it is assumed as an iconic gourmet cheese, when compared with other Portuguese cheeses. In the present work, the evolution of the lipid fraction, namely unsaturated fatty acids such as monounsaturated and polyunsaturated (omega 3 fatty acids and omega 6 fatty acids), was evaluated for a period of 9 months. Chemically it was possible to verify differences in terms of the fatty acid profile between the analysed cheese samples. SE cheese was characterized by a relatively high content of monounsaturated fatty acids (MUFA) and the evaluation of the lipid profile of SE cheese allowed possible future work in determining bioactive lipid compounds with possible health promoting functions.

**Keywords:** Serra da Estrela cheese, fatty acids, flavour, health

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