

production area

#### Norway

The Sognefjord area, in western Norway, including the village of Undredal.

#### Presidium producers

6 cheesemakers and 2 retailers working within the Undredal Stølsysteri cooperative:

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Pascale Baudonnel and Ivar-Bjarne Underdal  
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pascale@gardsost.no / ivar@gardsost.no

Leif Inge and Øystein Underdal (retailers)  
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Photo:  
Eva Brænd  
Pascale Baudonnel  
Maria Underdal



Slow Food Presidia are local projects that work to improve the infrastructure of artisan food production. The goal of the Presidia is to guarantee a viable future for traditional foods by stabilizing production techniques, establishing stringent production standards, and promoting local consumption. The Presidia project is coordinated by the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity, which organizes and funds projects that defend our world's heritage of agricultural biodiversity and gastronomic traditions.

The Presidium is sustained by



FMLA Sogn og Fjordane



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Aurland Kommune

Presidium coordinator

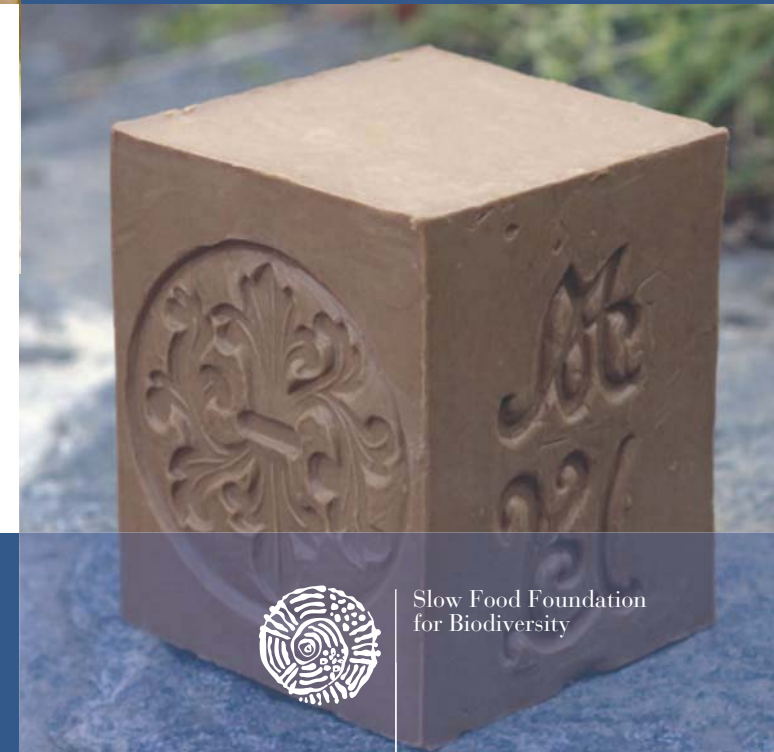
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Slow Food®

# Artisan Sognefjord Geitost



Slow Food Foundation  
for Biodiversity

# The brown cheese

The villages scattered along the Sognefjord, Norway's longest and deepest fjord, have an ancient tradition of producing goat cheese from fresh raw milk. Villagers here have made Artisan Geitost for hundreds of years. The fjord's small village of Undredal is the most outstanding representative of this product because of its strong and continuous tradition. Up until 1988, the only way to get to Undredal was by boat, and this isolation contributed to the conservation of the village's cheesemaking and goatherding traditions.

Locals call the village's brown cheese brimost, nationally it is also known as Undredalsost which means 'cheese from the village of Undredal'. The term Undredalsost refers to both traditional cheeses produced in the village from raw goat milk, although they are quite different in taste and production techniques: fresh 'white' cheese and sweet caramelized 'brown' cheese (a category often referred to as geitost (goat cheese)). The 'white' cheese has traditionally been unsalted, nowadays also a lightly salted version is made as an adaptation to modern tastes. The 'brown' cheese is produced from the whey drained out of the curdled milk. The village's 'white' cheese is made like a classic fresh goat cheese from raw milk curdled with calf rennet, then drained and pressed. The wheels of 'white' cheese weigh about 2.5 kilos each and can ripen for several months.



The brown cheese is made with a more unusual technique, one found in Norway and Sweden, but nowhere else in Europe. To make this speciality, fresh whey is boiled immediately after pressing it out of the 'white' cheese. Eventually a minor quantity of whole goat milk and cow's milk cream is added. This mixture is cooked for 8-10 hours, and during cooking, the lactose sugar and the proteins naturally present in the milk reacts in a process called the Maillard reaction, and turns brown almost like caramel. The solid mass that forms from the cooked whey – made primarily of albumin protein, milk fat, and milk sugars - is then left to cool. It solidifies as it cools, and once it is fairly solid yet still malleable it is kneaded and pressed into square wooden molds. After a day in the molds, it is ready to be eaten – locals like it best sliced thin and eaten on bread.

Undredal's cheesemakers have always produced their brown cheese with traditional methods and their own fresh raw goat milk but in 1991, the cheesemakers of the village faced a challenge when local food safety authorities demanded that they started pasteurizing the milk. One of the local producers Pascale Baudonnel studied cheese technology at Surgères (France) and took it upon herself to lead a fight against the authorities for the right to use raw milk on behalf of all small-scale cheesemakers in Norway. Pascale now runs a small cooperative dairy, Undredal Stølsysteri, with her husband and two other families. In response to the challenge from Norway's food authority this led to the founding of Norsk Gardsost, an Association for Norwegian smallscale cheesemakers. By 1997, Norsk Gardsost had become a countrywide association based in Undredal. The organization includes 140 cheesemakers from across Norway, and is working not only for the promotion of traditional cheeses, but also to raise awareness among the Norwegian public and to campaign in favor of the right to produce raw milk cheese.

# The Presidium

The continued production of Sognefjord Geitost cheese in Undredal represents the struggle of Norwegian cheesemakers against laws that favor industrial dairy production. During the 20th century, traditional cheesemaking in Norway deteriorated almost to the point of nonexistence, and the traditional brown cheeses have been replaced throughout Norway with mass-produced whey cheeses made from cow and goat milk.

Undredal Stølsysteri remains one of the few cooperatives that makes raw milk Geitost, and recently became the first authorized producer of cheeses from raw goat milk in the country.

The producers involved in this Presidium use milk from goats of the local breed. The goats are grass-fed and are free to graze on the fjord for most of the year.

The Presidium will work to bring attention to the noble work of defense of farmers' rights to produce raw milk cheese and will promote the quality foods produced in the remote and delicate ecosystem of the Sognefjord.

