

## **The production of Alpine Ricotta Cheese in FVG (Italy)**

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The experimental technical assistance of ERSA since 2001 is addressed to follow the dairy production in alpine cheesemaker huts. In the present poster, the Alpine Ricotta Cheese production is analyzed. This milk derivative is the result of centuries of old traditions and methods and it has inimitable tastes and smells. For this reason, it is widespread used in the typical friulian dishes. 31 productions of Alpine Ricotta Cheese in 12 cheesemaker huts of FVG (Italy) were monitored, during season 2016. The main parameters were recorded and all the steps analyzed, together with the dairyman, in order to stress out any criticisms and to overcome them. The experts gave recommendations about the correct way of employing the acidifier. Another meaningful feature is the new trend to add milk, cream or butter milk to the whey for the production of alpine ricotta cheese. This is not typical of our Region and in this way there is the risk to distort the original taste of the product. Furthermore, these additions modify the structure of this dairy, making it more tender and moist. In this way, the shelf-life is reduced and some problems can arise during the smoking phase. It can be noticed that the other parameters, as times and temperatures, respect the recommended ranges for obtaining excellent products, so positive conclusions can be expressed about the production of the "Scuete fumade" (Alpine Ricotta Cheese). From 2001, a huge database was created and an "easy-to-use" tool was elaborated that offers the opportunity to analyse the evolution trend, seasons after season, and to examine its development. During these years, working together with Ersra, the cheesemakers improved significantly the quality of this peculiar product. This approach will be very important in the future to maintain the markets or to develop new ones, because it permits to adapt to the market's needs and demands without losing their specificity, originality and authenticity. It can be stated that the challenge for this type of products, that can be defined of "niche", is to preserve their peculiarity in a modern and innovative way.