

VALDEON



- COUNTRY:** Spain
- REGION:** Leon
- MILK:** Cow and Goat blend
- RIND:** This cheese is wrapped in vine, maple, oak or chestnut leaves
- WINES:** Spanish Reds, or a good batch of Sangria

Valdeon is a striking blue cheese that is wrapped in maple, oak, vine or chestnut leaves and left 'curing' in large caves. It is a blend of cow and goats milk and has a savvy piccante flavour. Produced in the mountainous northwest region of Leon, Valdeon is a mixed- milk cheese. Cow's milk predominates, but producers can add goat's or sheep's milk, too. After the curds form, they're inoculated with *Penicillium* spores to initiate the blueing. Then they're cut smaller, drained and molded. Once they are firm enough to unmold, the wheels are salted and pierced with needles to create the air channels where the blue veins will form.

The milk for Valdeon may be raw or pasteurized, however only parseurized is allowed in Australia. Raw-milk wheels age at least two months; pasteurized versions get a minimum of a month and a half. Maturation takes place in mountain caves of at least 85 percent humidity. According to Spanish cheese authority Enric Canut,

Valdeon is less intense and has fewer blue veins than Cabrales because the Valdeon caves are a little drier.