

Stilton's historic announcement

The village of Stilton in Cambridgeshire has announced (in May, 2011) its intentions to restart the production of the world famous cheese which bears its name. Although the cheese hasn't been produced in the village for some two hundred years, since 1996 it has actually been illegal for any cheese produced in the village to be called Stilton. This was when the Stilton Cheese Makers' Association obtained a PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) stating that the village's name could only be used on cheese produced in the counties of Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire.

For many years it has been reported that the cheese only became known as Stilton because it was first sold from the village, but was actually made in Leicestershire, in the area around Melton Mowbray. However recent research has now proven that the cheese did in fact originate in the village in the early 1700s and was made here for many years before its production gradually shifted to Leicestershire and beyond.

The village is now applying to the EU for an amendment to the PDO to be included in the protected area allowed to produce the cheese.

Shailesh Vara, MP for North West Cambridgeshire, is supporting the move and has said *"I am delighted - it is only right that the village should be allowed to produce the famous cheese which originated here. This is part of our local heritage and worth fighting for. There are clear economic benefits for the village and surrounding area from the lifting of the local ban. The campaign can continue to rely on my firm support"*

Olive Main, chairman of Stilton Parish Council, has said -

"Anyone interested in the social and economic history of Stilton must conclude that cheese making has a long history in this village, going back to the Roman era. It is inconceivable that the rich agricultural lands of the parish, which stretch from the Fens to the Northhamptonshire uplands, did not produce a distinctive cheese: new research has confirmed this view.

"It is now time that an historic wrong was righted and the way opened for Stilton cheese -making to return to its traditional home. This is not just an economic and commercial opportunity, but the chance to give back to the Parish a part of its heritage that seemed lost forever"

Liam McGivern, Owner of The Bell Inn, Stilton, said -

"I am delighted with these revelations, as I have always believed Stilton was originally produced in Stilton, but have been distracted by the many unsubstantiated theories which were purported to be factual. These theories are still being bounded around by many ill-informed individuals.

"I am hopeful this new evidence will establish the truth and provide the opportunity for the creation of a dairy, for the production of traditional Stilton cheese in our village, thus restoring old skills and bringing new employment into the village"