

Is French Cheese Rind Edible?

In general, **most French cheese rinds are edible**, and in fact there is an arcane law that states all French cheese rinds **must** be edible. But whether they are enjoyable to eat depends on the type of cheese, personal preference, and the specific rind. Here's a breakdown:

Types of Cheese Rinds and Their Edibility

1. Natural Rinds

- **Examples:** Comté, Gruyère, Tomme de Savoie
 - **Edibility:** These rinds are formed naturally during the aging process and are usually edible.
 - **Taste and Texture:** They can be quite tough and earthy. While edible, some people find them unpleasant to eat because of their texture or intensity of flavor.
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2. Washed Rinds

- **Examples:** Époisses, Munster, Reblochon
 - **Edibility:** Washed rinds are often soft and sticky, thanks to being washed in brine or alcohol. They are fully edible.
 - **Taste and Texture:** These rinds have a strong, pungent flavor that some adore and others find overwhelming. Try them to see if you enjoy the bold taste!
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3. Bloomy Rinds (White Rinds)

- **Examples:** Brie, Camembert, Saint-Marcellin
 - **Edibility:** Made of edible molds, these soft, white, velvety rinds are almost always eaten with the cheese.
 - **Taste and Texture:** Mild and creamy, they complement the cheese's interior beautifully. Most people enjoy these rinds.
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4. Ash or Herb-Coated Rinds

- **Examples:** Selles-sur-Cher, Valençay, Morbier
- **Edibility:** These rinds are edible, often featuring a layer of ash, herbs, or spices.
- **Taste and Texture:** Ash rinds can have a slight mineral flavor, while herb coatings add an aromatic twist. Both are worth trying.

5. Wax or Plastic Rinds

- **Examples:** Babybel (wax), some industrial cheeses
 - **Edibility:** Not edible. These are artificial rinds used to protect the cheese during aging or transport. Remove and discard before eating.
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6. Hard and Dry Rinds

- **Examples:** Parmesan (Parmigiano-Reggiano), aged Cheddar
 - **Edibility:** Technically edible, but they are often too hard and dry to enjoy raw.
 - **Taste and Texture:** These rinds are better used for cooking—adding them to soups or stews can enhance flavor.
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Are Some Rinds Edible But Unpleasant?

Yes, some rinds are technically edible but may not taste good to everyone due to:

- **Strong Flavors:** Washed rinds can be too pungent for some palates.
 - **Tough Textures:** Hard, leathery rinds can be difficult to chew.
 - **Bitter Notes:** Natural or ash rinds may have bitter or earthy undertones that not everyone enjoys.
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Tips for Eating Cheese Rinds

1. **Experiment:** Try a small piece of the rind to see if you like the taste and texture.
2. **Ask a Cheesemonger:** If you're unsure about a specific cheese, a cheesemonger can guide you on whether the rind is typically eaten.
3. **Pairing:** Rinds can sometimes taste better when eaten with the cheese or paired with wine or bread.

In conclusion, **most French cheese rinds are edible**, but personal preference plays a big role in whether you'll enjoy them. Don't hesitate to experiment!

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