

Say cheese for strong teeth

Cheese is supposedly clogging up your arteries, causing catarrh and allergies, and is even rumored to induce nightmares. But the reputation of cheese took a turn for the better yesterday as it emerged as a fine food for staving off tooth decay.

A three-year review of scientific data on the subject, by the British Nutrition Foundation, found that rounding-off a meal with, say; Cheese counteracted the damage caused by guzzling puddings.

When we eat sweet foods the sugar reacts with bacteria in the mouth to create acid, which erodes tooth enamel.

But the salt and fat in cheese stimulate production of saliva, which neutralizes the acid. Calcium and the milk protein casein, both found in cheese, also strengthen the enamel.

Ursula Arens, a nutrition scientist at the foundation, which yesterday published its findings, said: 'There is no one reason why cheese is so good in curbing tooth decay but a host of explanations, the main one being that it counters the production of acids at the tooth surface that occurs after eating sugar-containing foods.'

The findings were greeted with enthusiasm by the cheese industry. Jane Maskew, secretary of the Specialist Cheesemakers' Association, said: **'It's good that someone is saying something positive about cheese for a change.'**

Nigel White, secretary of the British Cheese Board, added:
'No one is saying you should eat a pound of cheddar after a meal, but this shows that a small chunk, a little of what you fancy, does you good.'

By Sarah Hall