Parmesan cheese may really be wood pulp

By Lydia Mulvany, BloombergBusiness

The cheese police are on the case.

Acting on a tip, agents of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration paid a surprise visit to a cheese factory in rural Pennsylvania on a cold November day in 2012.

They found what they were looking for: evidence that Castle Cheese Inc. was doctoring its 100 percent real parmesan with cut-rate substitutes and such fillers as wood pulp and distributing it to some of the country's biggest grocery chains.

One might be tempted to think of this as a ripped-from-the-headlines episode of "NYPD Bleu," except that the FDA wasn't playing. Some grated Parmesan suppliers have been mislabeling products by filling them with too much cellulose, a common anti-clumping agent made from wood pulp, or using cheaper cheddar, instead of real Romano.

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