

Real Vegan Cheese: Vegan Cheese Gets Real

Nonprofit group shows proof of concept that they can produce animal free cheese.

OAKLAND, CA -- November 27, 2018: Real Vegan Cheese (RVC) is a grass-roots, non-profit Open Science collective dedicated to producing sustainable, animal-free cheese. The product will have cheese proteins identical to traditional animal based dairy cheeses, but without animal suffering, a lot less greenhouse gas emissions, and no stomach-roiling lactose. The RVC team has achieved initial milestones in their work to produce cheese using cellular agriculture techniques.

Launched in 2014 as an entry in the International Genetically Engineered Machine competition (iGEM), the project raised initial funds through a 2014 Indiegogo crowdfunding campaign. In 2018 the team secured additional funding from a private foundation which enabled more intensive lab work. This led to a breakthrough achievement: production of all four cheese proteins (alpha-s1, alpha-s2, beta, and kappa casein) in friendly microbes, and successful purification of three of the four. The team will be sending out DNA kits with the successful genes to their Indiegogo backers.

The RVC team has also begun to use these recombinant proteins in milk reconstitution and cheesemaking experiments, with the goal of producing vegan cheese from the proteins in combination with other ingredients including plant-based fat and sugar. A mozzarella-like cheese was successfully made using recombinant kappa casein, which is especially critical in cheese formation.

Real Vegan Cheese is gearing up for a new crowdfunding campaign in the new year to support the next stage of work, including process optimization, cheese production using all recombinant proteins and plant-based ingredients, and scale-up. Until then, donations are gratefully accepted at realvegancheese.org/donate

About Real Vegan Cheese:

Real Vegan Cheese is a non-profit community research project run jointly by Counter Culture Labs in Oakland, and BioCurious in Santa Clara, CA.

About Counter Culture Labs:

Counter Culture Labs is a community of scientists, tinkerers, biotech professionals, hackers, and non-professionals who have banded together to create an open community lab — a hackerspace for DIY biology and community science. www.counterculturelabs.org

About BioCurious:

BioCurious is a Bay Area hackerspace for biotech. Opened in 2011, BioCurious is a completely volunteer run non-profit organization. They serve the community by providing low-cost lab space and classes to members. www.biocurious.org

Contacts:

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To support the project: realvegancheese.org/donate