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.

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.

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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