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## The cutting edge of cheese research

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IT'S not how the cookie crumbles that has scientist Sally Gras reaching for the microscope — it's cheese. Cheddar cheese, to be precise.

A senior lecturer at Melbourne University, Dr Gras has spent the past two years researching how cheddar cracks under pressure.

Her work with colleagues Lydia Ong, Ray Dagastine and Sandra Kentish could help Victorian cheese makers increase their sales, and consumers are set to benefit from a more consistent crumble.

Dr Gras said that by minimising the waste in less than perfect batches, cheese makers' output could be boosted. Even an increase of 0.5 per cent would mean an extra 2000 tonnes of cheese produced in Australia each year, or \$5 million in sales.

Key components of cheddar are milk, starter bacteria — which provides the taste — and enzymes. "When it comes to efficiency and yield, we want to make sure we get the most from the raw ingredients," Dr Gras said. "And cheese texture is quite important for consumers."

Dr Gras said the key to her work, for which she was awarded an \$18,000 Victorian Fellowship Award, was to understand how protein and fat globules were arranged in the cheese. On average, Australians each consume about 12 kilograms of cheese each a year.

*This story was found at: <http://www.theage.com.au/small-business/smallbiz-marketing/the-cutting-edge-of-cheese-research-20090818-eoct.html>*

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