

MAKING SIMPLE CHEESE

On our homestead, we do not like going to the grocery store if there is a way for us to create our own products from scratch, using what we have on hand. Making cheese is a prime example of that. Using raw milk straight from our goats, we are able to recreate all types of cheeses that we eat daily at home. We can recreate everything from cheddar to soft chevre, mozzarella to cream cheese. Along that line, we also make butter, sour cream, and cottage cheese.

Every morning, we decide what we are going to use our milk for during that day. 2 days a week, we make cheese, one day a week, we make butter. The rest of the week, we use it for drinking. Nothing gets wasted as the pigs are happy to drink anything that is left over. We have been making cheese weekly for about a year now when last season we picked up a goat in milk. Now, we have 4 in milk and 3 more pregnant for this season.

Our history: Our family has lived in the Chino Valley Area for over 25 years. We have 7 kids (ages 8 to 17) plus occasional foster kids in our home.

We currently have a family garden which is about ¼ acre, 2 greenhouses one of which houses an aquaponics system growing fish and lettuce year-round, herb and berry walks. We raise our own meat including a steer, pigs, goats, quail, rabbits, chickens, ducks, geese and turkeys. We homeschool our children math, English, science, history and also teach them life skills that most kids have no understanding about including homesteading, cooking from scratch, solar oven cooking, carpentry, making soap and cheese, animal husbandry etc. We dehydrate and can our summer crop to use later and do all of this on less than 3 acres. We currently have 7 pigs, 9 goats and about 45 chickens, plus many rabbits and over 100 quail. We have several cabinet incubators where we hatch our own birds. We do not go to the grocery store from May until October

We also maintain an active website and Facebook page for our homestead where we share recipes, tips and tricks for homesteading and preparedness and list animals for sale.

General list of items needed for cheese making.

Tools that you will need to make cheese

- Strainer
- Large bowl (that the strainer fits in)
- Cheese cloth or flour sack towels
- Large slotted spoon
- Pot
- Thermometer

Certain cheeses need cultures. We purchase ours from www.homesteadersupply.com and from www.culturesforhealth.com

SIMPLE FARM CHEESE

This simple farm cheese can come together quickly. It tastes mild and sweet, and doesn't require rennet, making an excellent cheese for beginners.

Serves: about 1 pound

- 1 gallon milk, not "ultra-pasteurized" You may use raw or pasteurized
- ½ cup white vinegar
- 2 teaspoons sea salt or cheese salt

COOKING INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Line a colander with a double layer of cheesecloth or a single layer of butter muslin. We use flour sack towels at our house.
2. Pour the milk into a large, heavy-bottomed kettle, and bring it to a boil over medium heat. Stir it frequently to keep the milk from scorching. When it comes to a boil, immediately remove from heat and stir in the vinegar.
3. The milk should immediately begin separating into curds and whey. If it does not begin to separate, add a bit more vinegar one tablespoon at a time until you see the milk solids coagulate into curds swimming within the thin greenish blue whey.
4. Pour the curds and whey into the lined colander. Sprinkle the curds with salt. Tie up the cheesecloth, and press it a bit with your hands to remove excess whey. Let the cheesecloth hang for 1 to 2 hours, then open it up and chop it coarsely. Store in the refrigerator for up to a week or eat fresh.

NOTES

The whey from these 2 cheeses does not contain a live culture, so it cannot be used to create ricotta. However, you can recycle it to feed pigs or soak grains for chickens.

LEMON CHEESE

Serves: about 1 cup

- ½ gallon goat's milk (raw or pasteurized, not ultra-pasteurized)
- 2/3 cup lemon juice
- Sea salt or cheese salt to taste

COOKING INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Slowly heat the milk on the stove until it reaches 180 - 185 degrees. Gentle bubbles should be forming and the surface will look foamy. Turn off the heat.
2. Stir in the lemon juice then let the milk sit for 10 minutes. The milk should curdle and become slightly thicker on the surface.
3. Line a colander with two layers of cheese cloth. Gently pour the milk into the cheese cloth then gather the cheesecloth up around the curds and tie it into a bundle.
4. Hang the bundle over a pot or jar so the liquid can drip out. (You can do this by attaching the bundle to a wooden spoon or a ladle and setting the spoon over the top of the pot or jar.)
5. Let the cheese drain for at least 1 1/2 hours. Scrape the cheese into a bowl. Stir in salt and/or other ingredients to taste.
6. Use your hands to pat and shape the cheese into a small wheel or log. A biscuit cutter works as well for shaping.
7. The flavor and texture of the cheese usually improves a little bit if you refrigerate it for a few hours before serving
8. The goat cheese should stay fresh in the refrigerator for 1 week.

FARMHOUSE CHEDDAR CHEESE

- 3 gallons whole milk
- Mesophilic Culture (1/4 tsp Abiasa, 1/8 tsp Danisco, or 1/16 tsp Sacco)
- 2 teaspoons calcium chloride (only needed for store bought milk or pasteurized milk)
- 1.5 tablet rennet or 3/4 tsp liquid rennet
- ¼ cup unchlorinated water
- 1 Tablespoon salt

COOKING INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Combine milk, (calcium chloride) in 16 qt stock pot (double boiler to prevent scorching)
2. Slowly heat mixture to 86 degrees. Turn off heat and stir in lactic cheese culture. (Different types of culture create different flavors of cheese) Stir gently throughout. Cover mixture and allow to rest undisturbed at 86 degrees for 45 minutes.
3. Dissolve rennet tablet or liquid rennet in 1/4 cup water.
4. Keep the milk at 86 degrees. Stir the rennet mixture into milk slowly but thoroughly. Allow milk to set undisturbed for 30 – 45 minutes or until curd shows a clean break.
5. Using long knife, cut the curds into 1/2 inch squares, then stir gently just to break the strips of curds into chunks. Let it sit to rest for 5 minutes.
6. Slowly heat the curds and whey to 102 degrees, raising the temperature 2 degrees every 5 minutes. Stir curd gently to prevent matting and reduce their size to half peanut size. A large whisk works well by placing it to bottom of pot and putting up right so curds break as they fall through the wisk. Hold curds for additional 30 minutes at this temperature
7. Place pre-warmed with hot water colander over a pot and pour the curds into it.
8. Reserve 1/3 of the whey and pour back into the cheese pot. Set colander of curds onto the cheese pot. Cover top with cheese cloth and lid to keep in warmth. Allow curds to drain for 45 to 60 minutes. This is called the cheddaring process.
9. Cut slab into pieces and press through french fry cutter or cut by hand.
10. Add 1 tablespoon coarse salt. Using your hands, gently mix the salt into curds. You can eat these curds now, or press into a wheel.
11. Place the curds into cheese press and follow the directions for dressing with cheese cloth for 12 hours.
12. Remove cheese from press, unwrap the cloth, place cheese on drying mat to air dry for 12 hours, creating a nice skin over the whole cheese. Cheese is ready to slice and eat or you can wax and age for stronger cheddar flavor.
13. Mix 1 tablespoon of salt with 1/2 cup of water. Use a corner of the cheese cloth to lightly apply a saltwater wash to the cheese.

The farmhouse cheddar recipe above is from www.homesteadersupply.com.

CHEVRE

Chevre is French for goat. This is a simple cheese that is a great addition to your cuisine.

Serves: about 1 pound

- 1 gallon goat's milk, not "ultra-pasteurized" You may use raw or pasteurized
- 1/8 teaspoon mesophilic culture, MA or MM
- 1 drop rennet in ¼ cup water

COOKING INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Heat milk to 86 degrees
2. Add the culture and rennet into the milk.
3. Cover and let set at room temperature (72 degrees) for 12 hours (overnight works GREAT for this recipe)
4. Place colander into large bowl and line the colander with cheese cloth
5. Ladle curds into cloth, tie ends and hang to drain.
6. Drain for 6-12 hours or until the curds reach desired consistency.
7. Store in a covered container for up to one week.

RICOTTA

- Whey left over from making live culture cheese. (chevre, cheddar, mozzarella, etc.)

COOKING INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Over direct heat, heat the hard cheese whey to 200°
2. Remove from heat and let cool for 30 minutes.
3. Place colander into large bowl and line the colander with fine cheese cloth
4. Pour whey into colander (Slowly, it is HOT)
5. Hang and drain curds
6. When it has drained, place the ricotta in a bowl and add salt to taste.
7. Store in a covered container for up to one week.