

Cheddar

By Lady Isabell Winter

Can be eaten in 5 weeks, but best when 3 months or older.

Cheddar is usually made from the milk of cows, but occasionally goat's milk is also used. The milk used for cheddar is frequently pasteurized, with an aging time of between three to thirty months, but up to 5 years for connoisseurs. It is fairly hard, sharp-tasting and of pale yellow or orange color.

The main difference between cheddar cheese and other cheese lies in a step that's added while making, this step is known as Cheddaring. In Cheddaring after the heating of curd takes places, it is kneaded with salt.

The quality of cheddar is usually not crumbly and should be smooth and firm. However the more aged the cheddar is, the more crumbly and sharp the taste becomes. Styles span the age range. The fine-textured, buttery Mild is five to six months old, the Medium with its strong aftertaste is eight to nine months, the more complex Mature is 10-12 months old, while the Vintage – aged for between 12 and 16 months – is intensely savoury, with a gently warming quality on the back palate, and an aftertaste that hints at mustard.

Day 1:

- Heat 10L milk to 32°C in water bath (turn off heat when at 28°C so it can do last bit on its own)
- Add 1/8 teaspoon culture
- Add 10ml rennet diluted in 10ml water or 5ml vegetable modulate in 5ml boiled cooled water

Leave to set in warm water for 45 – 60 minutes (keep tea towel on and around to keep warm)

Cut the curd into approximately 1cm cubes. Stir gently to ensure equal size

Let settle for five minutes (known as pitching)

Gradually heat to 35-35°C which will take approx 30 minutes. Ensure uniform temperature throughout. Stir gently until curd becomes firm and elastic in texture.

Scalding helps expel whey from the curd and also increase acid development.

Let settle for five minutes (known as pitching)

Place sterilized cheesecloth over a draining rack. Using a sterilized sieve, ladle the curd onto the cloth into a rectangular shape approx 2.5cm deep (net curtain in a feta frame works well).

Cut the curd into strips 20cm long, then turn and pile a little higher every 10-15 minutes to develop the acidity and the texture. Curd must be kept warm with a clean dry tea towel cloth. Cut and turn about three times, and should resemble cooked chicken breast meat. After this the strips will need to be torn and crumbled.

The purpose of milling is to reduce the curd to uniform sized pieces and to enable the salt to be distributed evenly, crumble the strips into small pieces.

Salt is added at the rate of 2% of the final weight, and mixed in very thoroughly (20gm in 1kg e.g. 1 Tb). Leave the curd to cool to 26°C.

Line your mould with sterilized cloth or nylon net, then fill with the cheese curd and press down with your fist. Pull the cloth up from the sides and place the follower on top. Put your mould into your cheese press and apply pressure slowly for the first two hours and then increase. The effectiveness will have to be judged on the resultant cheese. Pressure applied too fast results in excessive whey loss. Pressure applied too slowly results in chilling of the cur and poor consolidation. The cheese mould is then upside down and the cheese pushed out, readjust your cloth and replace the cheese into the mould up the other way. Continue pressing.

Day 2:

Remove the cheese from the mould and trim the edges (around the follower) with a knife. Soak in a 20% brine solution for up to 2 hours (200gm salt in 1L water) Store your cheese in a cool, moist atmosphere that is clean and rodent free. Wooden untreated shelves which have been removed and scrubbed. Optimum 5-10°C, 80-90% humidity. Turn every day initially, then every two days. Keep turning until firm. Store for at least 5-6 weeks

This type of cheese can be waxed or larded before placing on the clean wooden shelves or brine washed – every few days, i.e. rubbing the cheese both sides with a little piece of cotton cloth dipped in salt and water. Or you can bandage.

History

Cheddar was first manufactured in an English village of the same name located in Somerset. It should be noted that it is possible the cheese was first named after the town in which it was traditionally sold, as opposed to the region in which it was originally produced. One suggestion is that Romans brought the recipe to England from the Cantal region of France, where it was adapted.

It is believed that cheddar was made as early as 1170. One of the writings of the then King Henry II records the purchase of it in a pipe roll. These records note the purchase of 10,420 lb (4644 kg) at a farthing per pound (£3 per tonne). In these days, cheese was a bespoke affair, being made to order by dairy farmers, rather than being a matter of routine production, so was more of a luxury item rather than an everyday staple.

Cheddar cheese traditionally had to be made within 30 miles (48 km) of Wells Cathedral to enable it to be called cheddar, this was the central dairy district of the time if you like.

When Charles I was on the throne, demand outweighed supply so much that you could only get Cheddar at the King's court, and even then you had to pay before the cheese was made

Links:

http://www.cheesemakingrecipe.com/Cheddar_Cheese_Recipe.html

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cheddar_cheese

<http://www.cheddargorgecheeseco.co.uk/history.php>

<http://www.icons.org.uk/theicons/collection/cheddar-cheese>