Cheddar (Stirred Curd)

Equipment:

One 10 quart or larger stockpot plus a larger stockpot in which it fits to construct a water bath.
Kitchen thermometer accurate to 1 degree in the 70-120F range.
Colander
2 pound cheese mold lined with cheesecloth
Cheese press

Ingredients

2 gallons of whole milk (goat or cow).
1 packet direct-set mesophilic culture or 4 ounces prepared mother culture
Optional: 2 drops annatto extract cheese coloring
Optional: 1/4 teaspoon calcium chloride (if using goat or homogenized milk)
1/2 teaspoon liquid rennet in 1/4 cup non-chlorinated water (do not dilute until ready to use)
2 tablespoons pickling salt

Method

Heat milk to 90°F in a water bath, add mesophilic starter and stir well.

*Allow to ripen 45 minutes at 90°F*

Add annatto coloring, if using. Add calcium chloride, if using. Dilute rennet and add, stirring for 1 to 2 minutes.
Brake the agitation with the spoon or ladle. If using non-homogenized milk, stir the top inch of the milk for an additional 1 minute.

*Allow to set for 45 minutes, or until a clean break is achieved.*

Cut to 1/4-inch cubes.

*Let curds set for 15 minutes to let them heal.*

Increase heat to 100°F over 30 minutes, heating no more than 2°F every 5 minutes. Stir while heating.

Continue to stir and maintain temperature at 100°F for 30 minutes. Stop stirring and let the curds rest for 5 minutes.

Drain off whey and pour curds in a colander and allow to drain for several minutes. Return curds to pot and add salt evenly, mixing gently in it with your fingers.

*Keep curds at 100°F for 1 hour, stirring every 5 minutes.*

Line a 2 pound, 4 inch mold with cheesecloth, and fill with curds.

*Press at 15 pounds of pressures for 10 minutes.*

Remove and redress cheese, and press at 30 pounds for 10 minutes.
Remove and redress cheese, and press at 40 pounds for 2 hours.
Remove and redress cheese, and press at 50 pounds for 24 hours.

Remove cheese and air-dry for 2-5 days, or until the cheese is dry to the touch. Wrap in plastic film, wax, or vacuum seal the cheese and age at 55°F for 2-6 months.

(Adapted from Ricki Carroll’s recipe from her book "Home Cheese Making")