

Cheddar (Stirred Curd)

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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 2F 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")