Christmas Cheeseboard 2022 (Revised Edition 2023)

Make Your Own Christmas Cheeses

By Robyn Jackson

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@cheese_from_scratch_

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Welcome

As I sit down to write the second annual Christmas Cheeseboard Ebook, I am overwhelmed with excitement. For the second year in a row, I get to help homesteaders bring homemade cheeses to their Christmas tables!

For me, Christmas is about family. It is a special time of gathering that I spend love and energy preparing for. This love for Christmas has been passed down to me from both my grandmother and my own mother.

I can clear as day remember my Grandma's house at Christmas. Shiny bobbles hanging from the tree, tinsel and garland that stuck to your hair as you walked through the entry into the kitchen. A kitchen that smelled of fresh baking and turkey, Christmas cards hung from the roof, and the Santa that danced in the window. But more than all of the “things” was the feeling. The feeling of love and preparation that went into Christmas.

We all have special ways of preparing for this time of gathering. For some, it is Christmas cookies packed lovingly into tins, for others it is decorations hanging from the banisters or lights strung along the roof, maybe it is midnight mass taken alongside your family, or Christmas morning, coffee in hand and excited children; there is nothing more satisfying than taking time to create something beautiful for the people you love and care for.

The Recipes

The recipes in this book have been tested with both pasteurized milk, as well as raw milk.

Family

Whether you are making the cheeses in this book as a family, or enjoying them at the table together, the recipes in this book are meant to bring you closer to the people that matter most.

Gathering and Celebrating Through Food

For me, I would like nothing more than for my Children to look back and remember us gathering around food. Sitting at a long table, laughing, joking and smiling, eating as we go, happy and content to do nothing but sit and enjoy together.

Last year's Christmas Cheeseboard Ebook was such a hit that I have brought some of last years fan favourite recipes back.

In this Christmas Cheeseboard Ebook, you will find new recipes for making your own Bocconcini, Quark, Hand Cheese, and Colby, but you will also find last years favourites like Homemade Brie and Smoked Gouda. As some of these cheeses take awhile to age, you will need to start right away. So order your ingredients, check out the cheesemaking schedule, set some time aside and lets get Cheesemaking!

Robyn


@cheese_from_scratch_

Christmas Cheeseboard Menu

- Colby Cheese
- Smoked Gouda
- Brie with Apple Jelly
- Quark Balsamic and Onion Jam Board
- Christmas Hand Cheese
- Bocconcini appetizers with tomatoes, basil and balsamic

Weekly Schedule

Please note; This is a 6 week schedule leading up to Christmas. Though your Gouda and Colby will be tasty by Christmas on this schedule, they can also be made up to 6 months in advance.

Week 1

- [ ] Make Gouda
- [ ] Make Colby
- [ ] Possibly Make Brie (see Brie Size Chart)

Week 2

- [ ] Make Brie

Week 3

- [ ] If you have made the Brie, they should be covered in a white mold coat and ready to wrap.

Week 4

- [ ] This is a great week to do some advanced preparation like making the mozzarella for the bocconcini and preparing the apple jelly.

Week 5

- [ ] Make Quark
- [ ] Make Hand Cheese
- [ ] Flip Cheeses

Week 6

- [ ] Smoke Gouda or Colby
- [ ] Stretch Bocconcini
- [ ] ENJOY!

Shopping List

- [ ] _____
- [ ] _____
- [ ] _____
- [ ]

Notes

- [ ] _____
- [ ] _____
- [ ] _____
- [ ]

Shopping List

From The Cheese Supply Shop

Mesophilic Culture

Depending on where you order your culture, it may be different strengths. Always use the package directions verses the recipe quantities

Penicillium Candidium

Though I really recommend ordering this mold culture, If you just don't have time, head to the store and buy a brie. Scrape some of the mold off of the cheese and add it into your milk for a easy SUBSTITUTION.

Calcium Chloride

Only order Calcium Chloride if you will be using PASTEURIZED milk. No need to add this in for raw milk.

Rennet

Rennet comes in many different forms and strengths. your rennet may be a different strength than mine so, always use the package directions verses the recipe quantities.

Optional; Cheese wax

If you don't have a vacuum sealer and you are planning on making gouda or colby, you will need to order cheese wax. I recommend cream wax if you can find it.

From the Grocery Store

Milk

(See the next page for sourcing.)

Fine Ground Salt

(No additives.)

Optional: Apple Wood Chips

(Only if you are planning on smoking your cheese.)

Tips for Choosing Milk

Not all Milk will work for cheesemaking

Ultra pasteurized milk will not work for cheesemaking. Homogenized milk does not not work well.

Any Species will work

Cow, Goat, Sheep, Water buffalo! Use what you have! Keep in mind that goats milk does not always stretch properly for naturally acidified mozzarella recipes!

Old Milk does not make good cheese

Fresh and good quality milk is always best for cheesemaking!

Milks that can be used for cheesemaking

Good Quality Raw milk, Pasteurized milk, Non homogenized (cream line milk).

Places to look for milk

- Local farms
- realmilk.com
- Local raw milk Facebook groups
- Grocery store. If you are struggling to find milk that is not ultra pasteurized, look in the organic section.
- Your own animal. Hashtag "All I want for Christmas is a Milk Cow"

Cheesemaking Supply Websites I Recommend

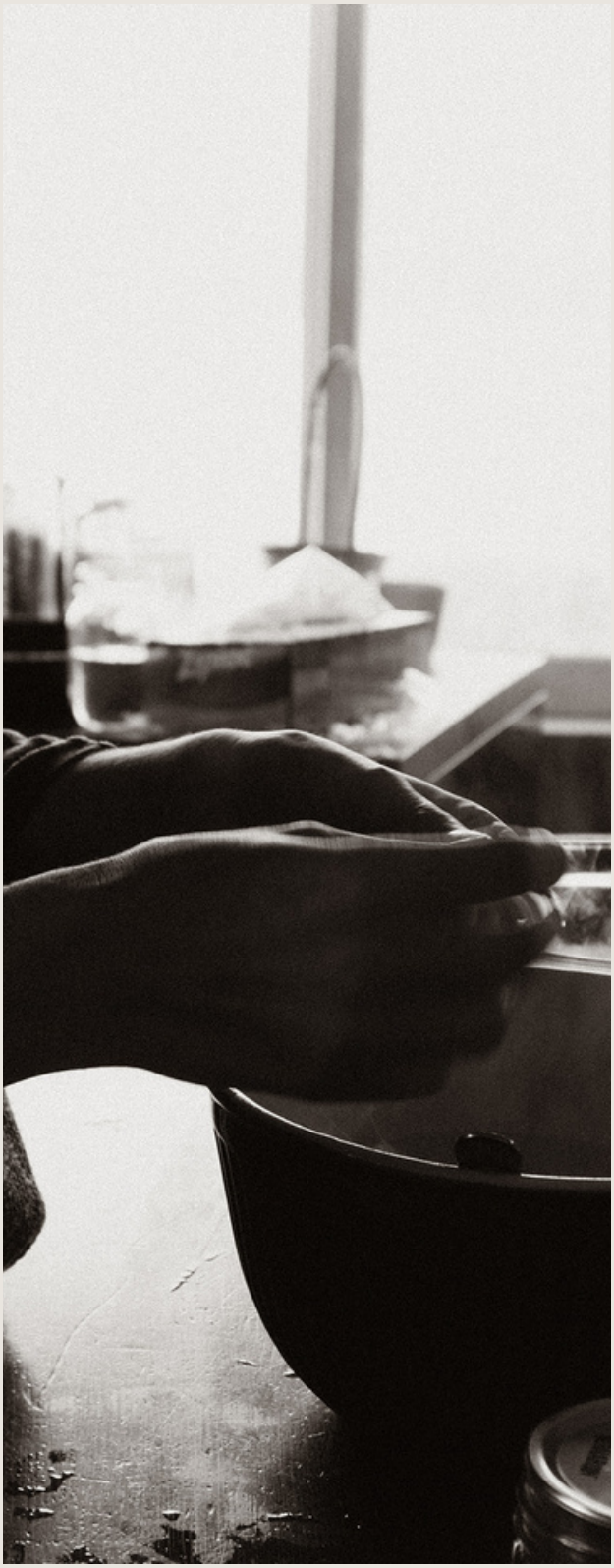
Support A Community Minded Business

Cheese Needs is amazing if you want to support a community minded business. Tracey has been a pivotal member of the cheesemaking community and has educated many people through her work with Cheese Needs as well as the Learn to Make Cheese Facebook page.

Traceys cultures are unique in that you need less, to make cheese! Her specialty cultures will go a lot further in your cheesemaking than conventional freeze dried cultures. This is not a sponsored ad, it is just a genuine, from the heart recommendation!

Order your cultures at www.cheeseneeds.com
Use The Coupon Code **ROBYN** to get The Christmas Cheeseboard Kit for $20 off until the end of August 2023.

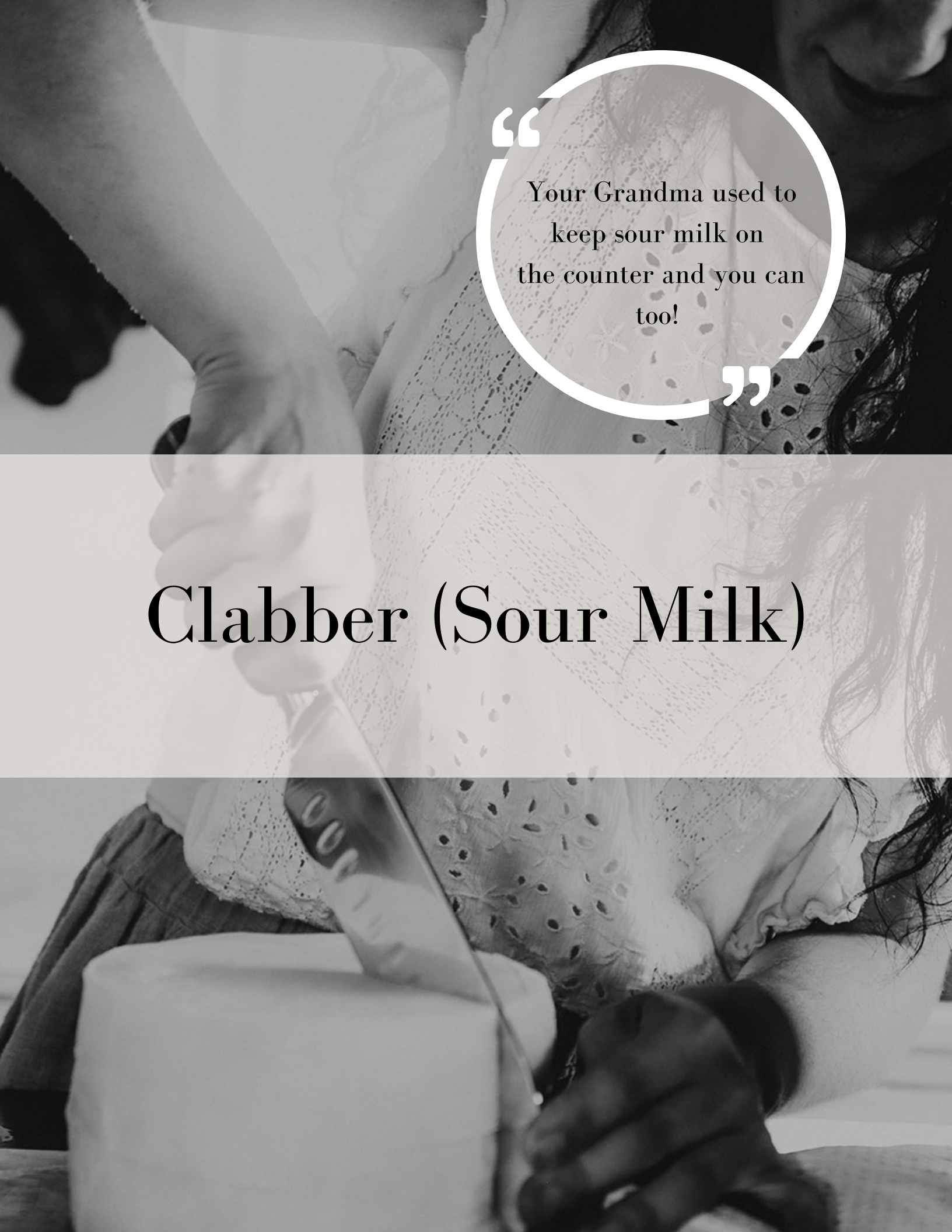
Scan this QR Code using the camera on your phone and come on a Cheeseneeds shopping trip with me!



An Alternative To Freeze Dried Cultures

You will notice that some of the recipes in this book have the option to use Clabber (sour milk) as a starter culture. If you have access to raw milk and are interested in dipping your toe into natural cheesemaking. Clabber is an excellent start and as the holidays are busy, full of cooking and baking, I highly recommend keeping a clabber culture going even if you do not plan to use it for cheesemaking.

Clabber is a diverse product and can be used to replace nearly every fresh dairy product you buy at the store; yogurt, sour cream, buttermilk, kefir! The list goes on! Read more about starting a clabber culture and keeping it going in the next section.



> Your Grandma used to keep sour milk on the counter and you can too!

Clabber (Sour Milk)

I think of Christmas as a time to look back on the past year and reflect on the homestead. It is a celebration of a year done, a showcasing of the food you have grown and produced. This year I spent a lot of time learning and re learning natural cheesemaking practices. One of these cheesemaking practices was relearning how to keep a Clabber culture going.

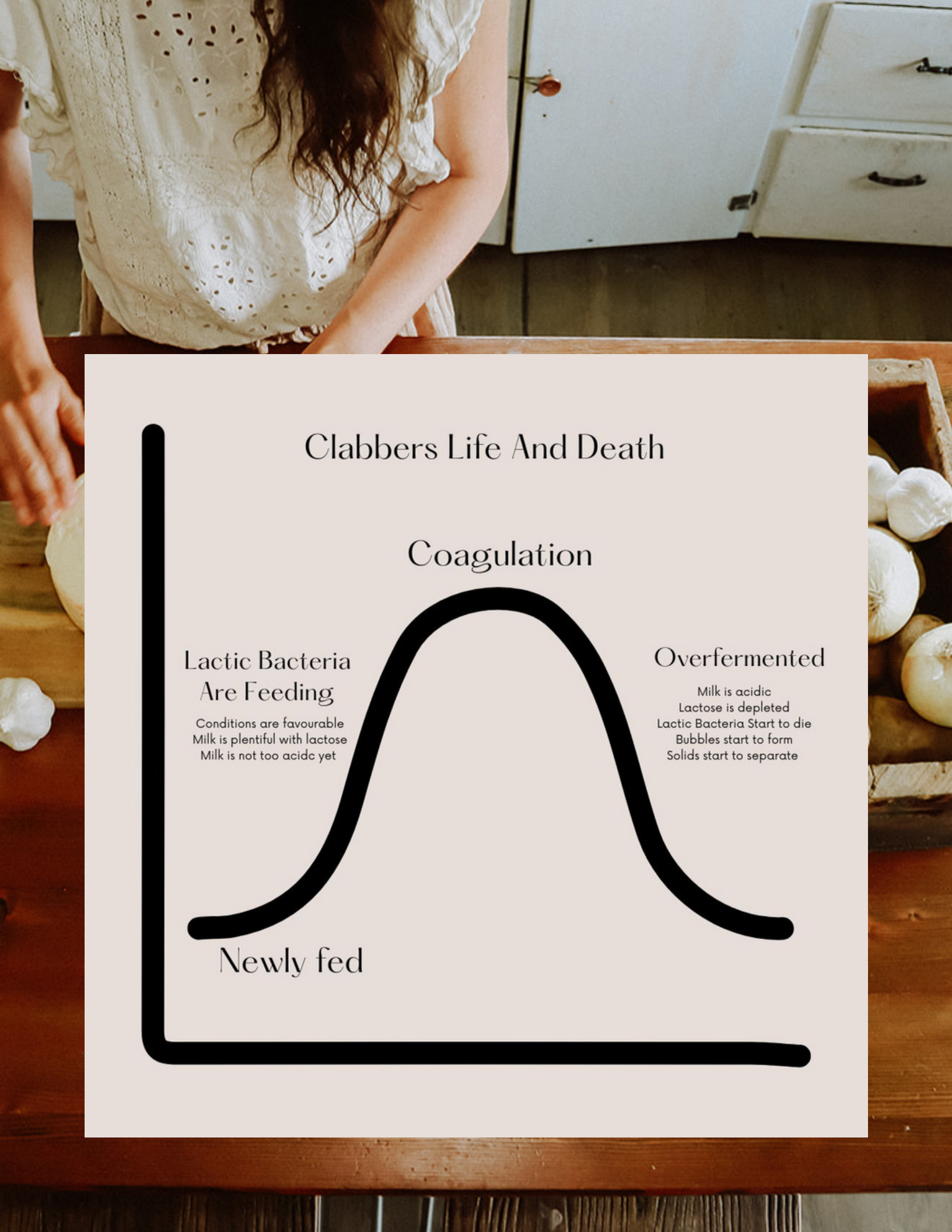
Clabber is raw milk left on the counter to coagulate, and you feed it much how you may feed a sourdough starter to keep it healthy.

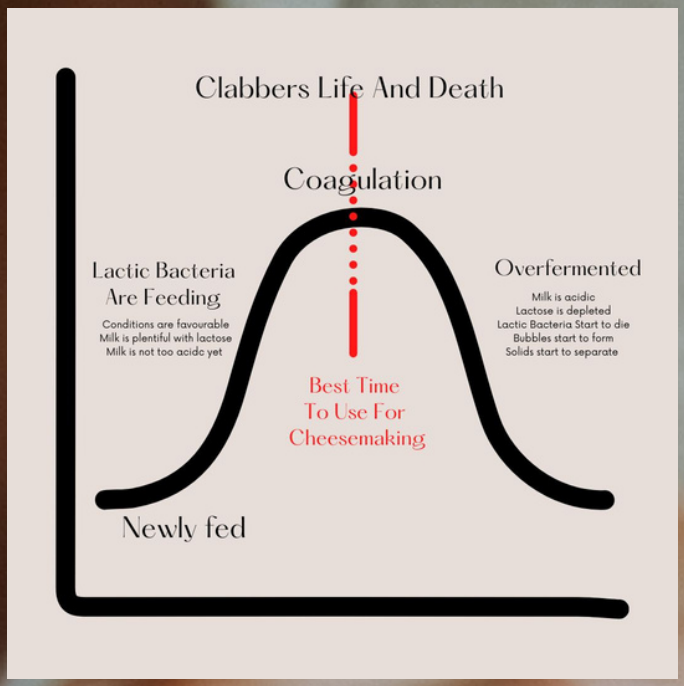
This is not a new idea, in fact its a very old one! Your grandma used to keep sour milk on the counter, and you can too! Some of the recipes in this book offer clabber as an optional ingredient. If you have access to raw milk, you may be interested in learning to keep a clabber culture. If you do not have raw milk access, don't worry, the recipes in the book give you freeze dried alternatives! No need to read this section!

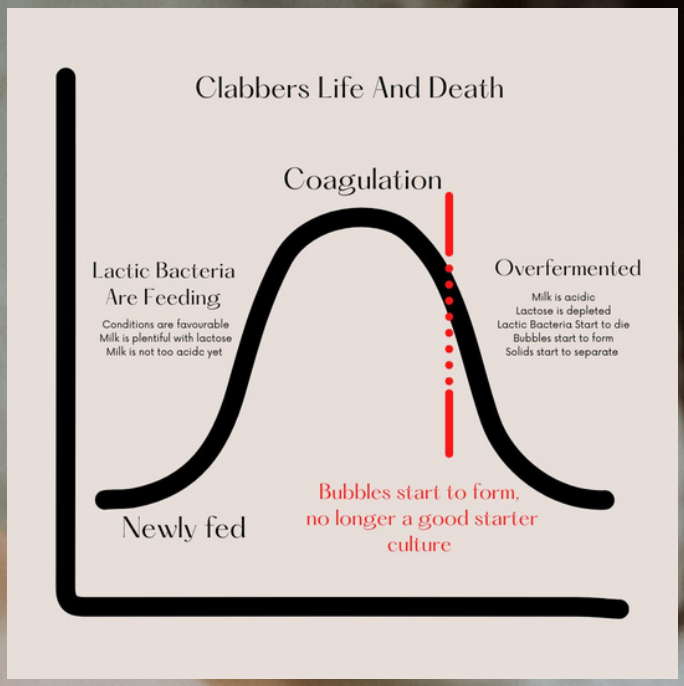
A few years ago I had a bad cheese run with some clabbered milk and decided that it was not for me, but this year after taking David Ashers cheesemaking workshop, I decided to give it another go. Clabber has quickly become one of my favourite foods, and is truly the most amazing, diverse dairy product out there.

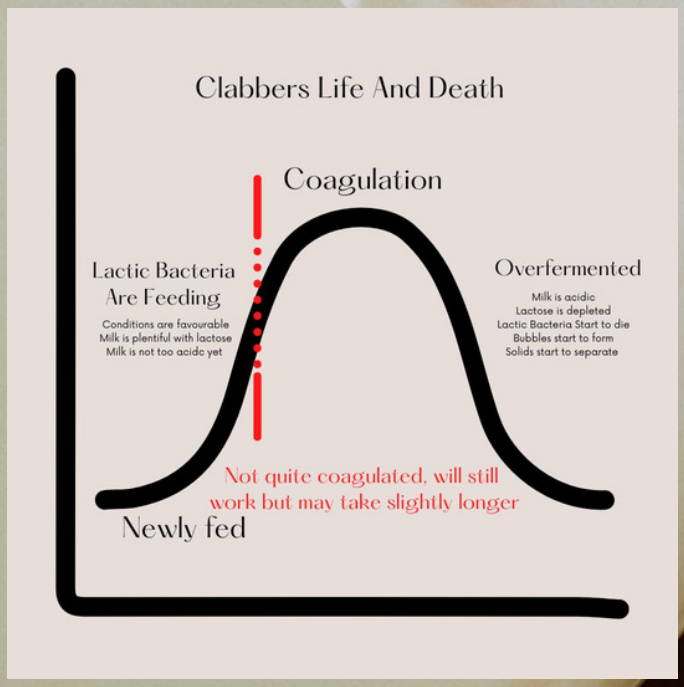
Many people unintentionally make clabber by forgetting raw milk out on the counter, or intentionally make it for farm animals like chickens, so that they can better digest the milk. The difference between just leaving milk out to clabber and using it, verses leaving milk out to clabber and keeping it as a starter culture, is that like a sourdough starter you must feed it to keep it healthy.

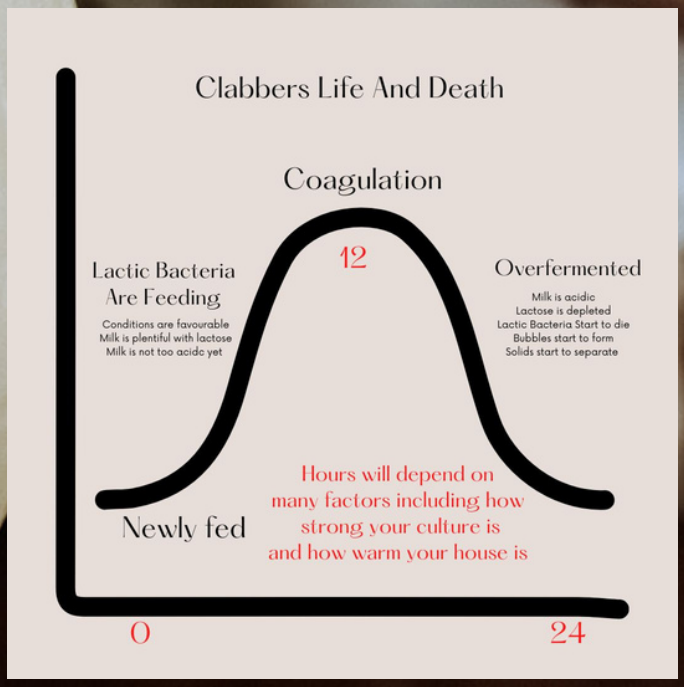
By feeding your Clabber you begin to foster a strong starter culture, and by continuing to feed and care for it, the bacterias become plentiful and strong. When you think about using clabber as a starter for cheesemaking, it is helpful to think about clabber in terms of a bell curve. Check out these charts to help you understand what is good to use for cheesemaking and what has over fermented.


Clabbers Life And Death
Coagulation
Lactic Bacteria Are Feeding
Conditions are favourable
Milk is plentiful with lactose
Milk is not too acidc yet
Overfermented
Milk is acidic
Lactose is depleted
Lactic Bacteria Start to die
Bubbles start to form
Solids start to separate
Newly fed


Clabbers Life And Death
Coagulation
Lactic Bacteria Are Feeding
Conditions are favourable
Milk is plentiful with lactose
Milk is not too acidc yet
Overfermented
Milk is acidic
Lactose is depleted
Lactic Bacteria Start to die
Bubbles start to form
Solids start to separate
Best Time To Use For Cheesemaking
Newly fed


Clabbers Life And Death
Coagulation
Lactic Bacteria Are Feeding
Conditions are favourable
Milk is plentiful with lactose
Milk is not too acidc yet
Overfermented
Milk is acidic
Lactose is depleted
Lactic Bacteria Start to die
Bubbles start to form
Solids start to separate
Bubbles start to form, no longer a good starter culture
Newly fed


Clabbers Life And Death
Coagulation
Lactic Bacteria Are Feeding
Conditions are favourable
Milk is plentiful with lactose
Milk is not too acidc yet
Overfermented
Milk is acidic
Lactose is depleted
Lactic Bacteria Start to die
Bubbles start to form
Solids start to separate
Not quite coagulated, will still work but may take slightly longer
Newly fed


Clabbers Life And Death
Coagulation
12
Lactic Bacteria Are Feeding
Conditions are favourable
Milk is plentiful with lactose
Milk is not too acidc yet
Overfermented
Milk is acidic
Lactose is depleted
Lactic Bacteria Start to die
Bubbles start to form
Solids start to separate
Hours will depend on many factors including how strong your culture is and how warm your house is
Newly fed
0
24

How to Start a Clabber Culture

Instructions

Check out a full tutorial on how to start a clabber culture here

Step 1- When you first start clabber all you have to do is set warm fresh raw milk out on the counter in a jar and cover with a loose lid. I recommend starting about a pint. Depending on your milk quality, and the temperature in your home, this first ferment time will be the longest. You may not see complete coagulation for a few days.

Step 2- As soon as you see coagulation, your starter is ready to be fed. Just like sourdough, you need to discard some of your ferment before adding in new milk. This first discard is not suitable for a cheesemaking starter culture but it can be used for tons of other recipes. Discard the majority of the contents of the jar (you can use this discard for all sorts of things, as a replacement for virtually any fermented dairy product; sour cream, yogurt, kefir, buttermilk). Keep about 1 tsp (the ratio is 1 part clabber to 50 parts milk) of of the clabber back and pour fresh milk into the jar. Put the lid on and let your clabber sit for 24 hours. The ferment time will be much quicker this time.

Step 3- After 24 hours, discard the contents of the jar, leaving back 1 tsp (or that ratio of 1:50) and put in fresh milk, put the lid on and let ferment 24 hours.

Step 4- Continue this cycle indefinitely; Ferment, Discard, Feed, Ferment.

Use Your Clabber for Cheesemaking

After a few feedings you can start to use your culture for cheesemaking. I am very inexperienced at using natural cheesemaking cultures and I approach the topic carefully. I have been burned before by using bad clabber culture to make aged cheese and having the heartbreak of making many very bad cheeses because of this. This time, after taking David Ashers Cheesemaking course, I am armed with a much better understanding of how natural cheesemaking culture works. Still I am approaching aged cheese with caution and starting myself off slow with fresh cheeses. (*Update as of 2023 I have been using clabber for many aged cheeses and it is working well).*

Natural cheesemaking cultures like clabber and kefir can be used to replace any freeze dried culture in a recipe.

They contain a host of different strains of bacteria, and it is up to you as the cheesemaker to use the cheesemaking technique to isolate the cultures you want in your batch. For example, if you are aiming for a thermophilic culture, as long as you heat to a heat that is conducive to a thermophilic culture thriving, a strain of thermophilic should be the bacteria that starts feeding and fermenting the milk.

Of course there are variables with this, unlike a freeze dried culture that contains very specific bacterias known to make good cheese, natural cultures do not offer that luxury.

The best a cheesemaker can do to ensure success, is to keep a healthy strong starter culture. A well fed, well cared for culture, that tastes good, theoretically should make good cheese.

Essentially what is happening when you make cheese is that the cheese is becoming the starter culture. Instead of feeding that tiny pint jar, you are feeding a whole pot of milk, and with no manipulation, that pot would become a giant pot of clabber.

Instead though, we manipulate the pot to foster the development of the bacterias we want, and use our cheesemaking to make that giant pot of milk into a cheese. When you think of it that way, it makes it easier to think about why a good tasting, well cared for culture is so important.

If you miss a feeding and your culture separates and takes on a very yeasty flavour, that discard is not a candidate for a cheesemaking culture. The resulting cheese would take on the yeasty properties of its starter.

How to Start Using Clabber as a Starter Culture

So now that we have established how to start a clabber culture and why it's important to care for it, let's look at where we should start.

In this book you will find several fresh cheeses that use clabber as the starter culture. You will be provided with the opportunity of making the Hand cheese, Cream cheese and Mozzarella with Clabber. If you are unsure of using Clabber for cheesemaking or you do not have a raw milk source at this time, don't worry! I give freeze dried culture substitutions in all of the recipes.

There is something to be said about keeping sour milk on the counter. Our grandmas used to do it! I can't remember by grandma ever keeping sour milk on the counter, but my mother in law, Maggie, talks about her grandmas sour milk often. Sour milk is so useful in many many different recipes. I have been using it in place of sour cream, yogurt, and buttermilk.

At first after making it, it has a strong flavour, but after a few weeks of religiously feeding it every day, your clabber will develop a mild flavour similar to yogurt and is something that I am content to replace as an ingredient in many baking recipes.

So on that note, even if you are not yet ready to dive into using Clabber as a starter culture for cheesemaking, it is a valuable ingredient to keep on hand and use throughout your kitchen and holiday cooking!

Ideas for Substituting Clabber in Your Christmas Cooking

- Mash your potatoes with it
- Use it in baking anywhere were you would normally use milk or a milk product. (My families favourite sugar cookie recipe uses sour cream, this year it will use clabber instead.)
- Use it to make sauces or milk gravies
- As a base for salad dressings

Supply List

Other than the specialty ingredients listed, the cheeses in this book are meant to be made with limited supplies. In fact, you may be able to make them with supplies that you have in your kitchen already!

Stainless Steel Pot

If you do not have a big enough stainless steel pot, you may use another material. I made cheese for years in my enamel canner pot. The bottom is thin and you have to watch heat control more, but it works!

Spoon

Knife

Cheese forms

For the brie, forms can easily be made from used yogurt containers with holes poked in them. For the pressed cheeses, you may use a food safe bucket with holes poked in it or the bottom cut off. Alternatively, a spring form pan works well.

Drying rack

This is just a fancy name for a cookie rack.

Vacuum Sealer or Cheese Wax

These days I vacuum seal most of my cheeses. I used to always wax them, but waxing cheese is a messy process. If you don't have a vacuum sealer look for special hand held vacuum seal bags, borrow one from a friend, or you may order cheese wax from an online cheese supply shop.

You may choose to order cream wax or hard cheese wax. My preference is cream wax, but hard wax will work if it is the only thing you can find. If you do decide to hard wax, understand that you will need a designated pot and spoon to wax with. These will be ruined after you use them and will only be good for waxing in the future. Take a trip to the thrift store and buy some inexpensive equipment or use a mason jar you don't mind loosing. For the amount of cheese that you will be making in this book, I recommend hard waxing with the paint on method. You can do a quick google search of how to wax cheese by painting. The advantage of this method, is that you do not need to order as much wax as the dipping method requires.

Aging Area

This book does not go in depth into the ins and outs of aging cheese. All of the cheeses in this book may be aged in a regular refrigerator. This is not ideal, and they will age more slowly, but unless you already have a designated aging area or a wine fridge, just age your cheeses in the crisper of your existing fridge.

Optional: Smoker

The technique for smoking cheese listed in this book use a smoker. We have a Bradley smoker and have had it for years. There are techniques to smoke cheese on a grill, but I have no experience with this. If you find that the smoking technique listed in this book does not accommodate your equipment, please don't give up! YouTube is chock full of videos that will teach you to smoke cheese with the equipment that you have!

Cheese Cloth

Cut up a sheet, use an old baby blanket, a light piece of cotton. The key is making sure it is light enough, (think muslin baby blanket weight). Don't use the stuff that they sell in the grocery store and call cheese cloth. It is a very loose weave and does not work good for cheesemaking.

Cheese Press

No you do not need to buy a cheese press to make the recipes in this book. A cheese press can easily be made using things that you have at home. All you need to do is exert force on your cheese. Whether that is achieved by stacking a bucket of warm water on it, a coffee can with books overtop or whether you actually own a designated press. Remember cheese has been made for centuries without fancy equipment!

Ripening Container

This is a fancy name for a big Tupperware container that can house your cheese in.

Ripening Mat

This is very basically something that is going to elevate your cheese off of the surface of your ripening container. I use shish-kabob sticks at the bottom of my ripening container to elevate my cheeses out of any moisture. You can use a drying rack or anything that will elevate your cheese.

Tiny Cheese Lesson

When learning to make cheese it is helpful to understand that most all cheeses start out the same. As you move along in a recipe, you will notice that they veer off to do other things, but all cheese follows the same basic principles.

Remember: Cheesemaking Is Controlled Decomposition

Temperature: Reaching an ideal temperature for bacteria to acidify your milk is the first step of cheesemaking. Think of a young calf drinking milk from its mother, this drinking of warm milk, aids in digestion by creating an ideal place for bacteria to thrive and enzymes to work.

Acidification: To turn to cheese, milk must first be acidified. This can be achieved by bacteria fermentation or by the addition of a direct acid like vinegar.

Coagulation: If left long enough acidified milk will begin to coagulate on its own. The acidic environment will wear down how the proteins are able to stay suspended in the milk and this will cause eventual coagulation. The process is very slow however, and to speed things up, we often add an enzyme called rennet. Rennet is an enzyme that is able to instantly change the way that proteins are suspended in milk. This causes the proteins to come together and creates a strong curd that is bound together by calcium.

Whey Release: Once your milk has coagulated it is a large curd mass. As the proteins coagulated and bound together they swept up the water with them. Nothing is holding the water in other than the fact that it is stuck between protein bonds. To extract the water, you must gently cut these bonds, and allow the water to escape from the curd. You will see that different recipes have you do different things to extract the whey and in turn, these different techniques will create different cheeses. For example, a curd that is cut very small will result in a dry cheese, a curd that is cut large will result in a soft cheese. These whey release techniques can affect the taste, texture and body of the cheese.

Things that Contribute to Whey Release

• **Acidification:** As curd acidifies, whey is pushed out.

• **Surface area:** The more surface area of a curd, the more whey is able to seep out. For example, a 1/2 inch curd will lose moisture at a much higher rate than a 1 inch curd.

• **Heat:** The warmer an environment, the easier whey is released.

• **Manipulation:** The more curds are moved, the more whey is released.

• **Pressure:** The more pressure applied, the more whey is able to seep out from between the curds. This pressure may come in the form of a cheese press or as simply as a bag of curds hung from a cupboard. Drainage is a form of pressing.

•**Salting:** Salt is the referee when it comes to cheesemaking. It aids in not only taste, but also texture and bacterial regulation. All cheeses that will be aged, or unrefrigerated for an extended period, need salt.

Aging: There are two stages of a cheeses life. The Bacterial stage and the Fungal stage. The bacterial stage has been everything up to this point. It has been the acidification of the curd caused by bacteria. The fungal stage is the aging of the cheese. At the point that this stage begins, the bacteria has successfully acidified the cheese to a point that:

1. There is no longer much lactose for the bacteria to feed on and
2. The environment of the cheese has become so acidic that the bacteria is no longer able to survive in the harsh environment. Even though the bacteria is no longer a major player in the cheese, the cheese is an ecology of fungal cultures and these cultures are able to continue the work of the bacteria by breaking down the cheese. Cheesemaking is controlled Decomposition. No matter what happens, the cheese will break down, and this second stage of the cheeses life is the furthering of breakdown.

So the answer to “why do many fresh cheeses taste the same?”, because fresh cheeses do not enter into this second stage, where the ecology of the cheese is really able to shine.

Getting Started

At Christmas time it is traditional for our family to do a baking day. Each member brings the ingredients for their favourite Christmas cookie or dessert and we spend the day bumping into each-other in my moms kitchen; talking, laughing and reminiscing of Christmas's past.

A dedicated day for preparation.

Preparing your Christmas Cheese Board does not take immense amounts of time over the next few weeks, but it does take a chunk of your time in week 1 and week 2. These are the weeks that you will make your Gouda, Colby and Brie. Remember, you don't have to make them all, choose a few that you are interested in and make those! *(Also remember, you can start your Colby and Gouda up to 6 months before hand)*

After week 2, the hands on time will be minimal until your final week, but I do offer some tips and preplanning ideas so that the week of Christmas is less about preparing and more about enjoying.

Put some Christmas music on (no its not too early!), fill your cup with something warm, and lets spend the day making Cheese!

Aged Cheeses

In this section we will be looking at the cheeses you should be making in the first few weeks of the cheesemaking schedule. These make ahead cheeses will be made in the next few weeks and be offered a time to age and develop flavour before consuming around Christmas.

Notes

Though you can use your established clabber culture to make these aged cheeses, if you are new to clabber, I don't recommend doing so. If you would like to further experiment with clabber as you learn to make cheese, I would love to hear about it, but for now, as these are special occasion cheeses and you are working very hard at getting them to the table for Christmas, I recommend you use freeze dried cultures. If you do decide to use clabber, use well fed clabber at a ratio of 1:50 (1 part clabber to 50 parts milk).

These recipes have all been tested with pasteurized, non homogenized milk, as well as raw milk. You will notice that all of the recipes list calcium chloride. You only need to use the calcium chloride if you are using pasteurized milk. Questions about choosing milk for cheesemaking? See page 11.

This is a big week and you don't have to make all of the cheeses. Pick and choose the ones that you think your family will enjoy the most! Try your best not to feel overwhelmed! No matter what, this should be fun! Put on the Christmas music, those fluffy slippers and pour a cup of something hot, this is Christmas cheesemaking season!

Gouda

Gouda was one of the first pressed cheeses I made. I remember struggling, as a new cheesemaker, to figure out how to wax it; stressing over every tiny detail. I actually very vividly remember my first gouda cheese. It was a tiny (maybe 1 lb) cheese, that I waxed. I remember the excitement of opening it up and eating it for the first time. It was delicious and I credit its success to the inspiration of many more cheeses.

Equipment

- Stainless Steal Pot with Lid
- Spoon
- Knife
- Cheese Cloth
- Cheese Press
- Cheese Form no more than 6-7 inches across. This will ensure your cheese does not end up too flat. Your cheese will reduce by about half
- Drying Rack
- Vacuum Sealer or Cheese Wax
- Aging Area or Regular Refrigerator
- Kitchen Scale

Ingredients

- 4 gallons Cow's milk
- 1/2 tsp Mesophilic Culture
- 1 tsp Calcium Chloride only if you are using pasteurized milk
- 1 tsp Liquid Rennet (double strength)
- Fine Ground Salt
- Water (Be sure that all water used in this recipe is non-chlorinated)

Always use the package directions for your rennet and culture rather than recipe recommendations!

Instructions

Step 1 - Thoroughly clean and sterilize all equipment and surfaces.

Step 2- Warm milk to 90F. Sprinkle Culture over the surface of the milk and let rehydrate for 5 min. Incorporate Culture into milk with an up and down stirring motion. *If using Cheese Needs cultures, from the Christmas cheesemaking kit, use the MO culture following package directions.*

Step 3- Dilute Calcium Chloride in 1/4 cup lukewarm water. Incorporate into milk. (Only if you are using pasteurized milk)

Step 4- Dilute Rennet in 1/4 lukewarm water. Incorporate into milk with an up and down stirring motion. Cover pot and let ripen for 30 min - 1 hour.

Step 5- Check for a clean break. Using a knife, cut curds into 1 inch cubes. Let sit for 5 min between each layer of cuts. This whole cutting process will take 10-15 min. (See Tip 2 on pg 64)

Step 6- Begin stirring your curds. Gently stir curds for 5 min, rest 5 min, stir for 5 min, rest 5 min. Repeat this until your curds sink to the bottom of the pot when they rest.

Step 7- Using a bowl and fine mesh sieve, scoop off the whey until you see the surface of the curds. Add 1 gallon of 120F water (be sure that it is non-chlorinated). I just use the hottest tap water that I can get. This will bring the temperature of your pot up to about 95F. *A big reason for contamination in cheese is water, it is recommended that you boil your water before using for cheesemaking.*

Step 8- Stir your curds for 10 min. Let curds settle to the bottom of your pot.

Step 9- Using a bowl and fine mesh sieve, scoop off the whey until you see the surface of the curds. Add in 1 gallon of 110F water (again be sure that it is non-chlorinated). Your pot temperature will now be about 100F (don't sweat it if it is a few degrees different).

Step 10- Stir curds for 20 min. The curds should shrink to the size of a kidney bean and when you press then between your fingers, they have some firmness, but still break apart. When squished between your hands, the curds should cling together.
Let curds settle to the bottom of the pot.

Step 11- Prepare your cheese form and cheese press, line form with cheese cloth. Using a bowl and fine mesh sieve, scoop off the whey until you see the surface of the curds. Working quickly, pack your curds into your prepared mold and pull the cheese cloth up around your cheese, leaving as few wrinkles as possible. Press at a low pressure (10-15 lbs) for 30 min. If your follower is a bucket, make sure that it is filled with nice warm water, this will facilitate your pressing.

A Few Tips For Pressing Cheese

- The more warmth you use, the less force needs to be exerted. If you have made a make shift press at home use a warm bucket of water as your follower.
- Learn how to choose or make your own cheese press here

Step 12- After 30 min, remove your cheese from the cheese cloth, flip it over, and redress it in the cheesecloth. Return it to the press and continue to press for 8 more hours at medium pressure (15-20 lbs). (Optionally, you may do one more "redressing" after 30 min. This will give you a smoother rind.)

Step 13- After 8 hours remove your cheese from the press. Your cheese should be approximately 4 lbs, but feel free to weigh it if you feel that it is different.

Using the ratio of 1 tbsp of fine ground salt to 1 lb of cheese, surface salt your cheese. Do this by dipping your cheese in water to wet the surface, and evenly rubbing the surface of your cheese with the designated amount of salt.

-***OR***-

If the cheese has lots of grooves or cracks in its surface, you may choose to brine salt instead of surface salt. To do this place your cheese in a 18% brine solution (5 cups water to 1 cup fine ground salt) for 3 hours per 1 lb of cheese.

Step 14- Dry on your drying rack for 1-2 days at room temperature, flipping twice a day, until dry to the touch. If it is hot in your house, place cheese in a container with a loose lid and dry in the refrigerator.

Step 15- At this point you may wax your cheese or vacuum seal your cheese. Transfer it to your aging area or the crisper of your refrigerator. The ideal temperature for aging this cheese is 50-55F but a regular refrigerator will work (it will just age slower). Flip your cheese over once a week. Your cheese will be ready to eat or smoke in 6 weeks, but may continue to age well for up to a year.

Colby

Colby cheese is one of the first pressed cheese recipes I ever made. My husband, Zach, originally from Wisconsin, has fond memories of a specific type of Colby cheese made close to his home town. He remembers a cheese, mild and full of holes; easy meals or after school snacks incomplete without a chunk of this cheese served on a cracker.

Over the years, I have honed and developed this recipe to match what he remembers, and it has become one of our staple cheeses. Rarely will you find a day that this cheese is not served up mixed in a meal, packed in a sandwich or, like Zach remembers, topped on a cracker.

Equipment

- Stainless Steal Pot with Lid
- Spoon
- Knife
- Cheese Cloth
- Cheese Press
- Cheese Form no more than 6-7 inches across. This will ensure your cheese does not end up too flat. Your cheese will reduce by about half
- Drying Rack
- Vacuum Sealer or Cheese Wax
- Aging Area or Regular Refrigerator
- Kitchen Scale

Ingredients

- 4 gallons Cow's milk
- 1/2 tsp Mesophilic Culture
- 3/4 tsp Calcium Chloride only if you are using pasteurized milk
- 3/4 tsp Liquid Rennet (or enough to coagulate 4 gallons of milk)
- Fine Ground Salt
- Water Be sure that all water used in this recipe is non-chlorinated
- **Optional**- 1 tbsp Red pepper flakes

Always use the package directions for your rennet and culture rather than recipe recommendations!

Instructions

Step 1- Throughly clean and sterilize all equipment and surfaces.

Step 2- Warm milk to 90F. Sprinkle Culture over the surface of the milk and let rehydrate for 5 min. Incorporate Culture into milk with an up and down stirring motion. Cover with lid, and let ripen for 1 hour. *If using Cheese Needs cultures, from the Christmas cheesemaking kit, use the MO culture following package directions.*

Step 3- Dilute Calcium Chloride in 1/4 cup lukewarm water. Incorporate into milk. (Only if you are using pasteurized milk)

Step 4- Dilute Rennet in 1/4 lukewarm water. Incorporate into milk with an up and down stirring motion. Cover pot and let ripen for 30 min - 1 hour.

Step 5- Check for a clean break. Using a knife, cut curds into 1 inch cubes. Let sit for 5 min between each layer of cuts. This whole cutting process will take 10-15 min. (See Tip 2 on page 64)

Step 6- Begin stirring your curds. (See Tip 1 on page 64) Gently stir continuously while slowly heating your milk to 105F. You want to make this process take about 45 min. At the end of stirring, the curds should be about the size of a navy bean and have some firmness, but still break apart when pressed between your fingers. When squished between your hands, the curds should cling together.

Step 7- Allow curds to sit under the whey for 15 min.

Step 8- Dip off the whey until you see the surface of the curds. Add back in equal amounts of 105F (same temperature) water. Stir for 2 min. *A big reason for contamination in cheese is water, it is recommended that you boil your water before using for cheesemaking.*

Step 9- Allow curds to sit under the whey for 15 min.

Step 10- Dip off the whey, optionally mix with red pepper flakes and pack your curds into your prepared form. Press at a low pressure (10-15lbs) for 30 min. If your follower is a bucket, make sure that it is filled with nice warm water, this will facilitate your pressing.

Step 11- After 30 min, remove your cheese from the cheese cloth, flip it over, and redress it in the cheesecloth. Return it to the press and continue to press for 8 more hours at medium pressure (15-20lbs). (Optionally, you may do one more "redressing" after 30 min. This will give you a smoother rind.)

Step 12- After 8 hours remove your cheese from the press. Your cheese should be approximately 4 lbs, but feel free to weigh it if you feel that it is different.

Using the ratio of 1 tbsp of fine ground salt to 1 lb of cheese, surface salt your cheese. Do this by dipping your cheese in water to wet the surface, and evenly rubbing the surface of your cheese with the designated amount of salt.

-OR-

If the cheese has lots of grooves or cracks in its surface, you may choose to brine salt instead of surface salt. To do this place your cheese in a 18% brine solution (5 cups water to 1 cup fine ground salt) for 3 hours per 1 lb of cheese.

Step 13- Dry on your drying rack for 1-2 days at room temperature, flipping twice a day, until dry to the touch. If it is hot in your house, place cheese in a container with a loose lid and dry in the refrigerator.

Step 14- At this point you may wax your cheese or vacuum seal your cheese. Transfer it to your aging area or the crisper of your refrigerator. The ideal temperature for aging this cheese is 50- 55F but a regular refrigerator will work (it will just age slower). Flip your cheese over once a week. Your cheese will be ready to eat or smoke in 6 weeks, but may continue to age well for up to a year.

Smoking Cheese

Smoking cheese is most commonly done after a cheese has aged. Once the cheese is smoked, it may be consumed immediately or it may be wrapped and stored for another week or so. The smoked flavour will intensify as the cheese sits.

In our house, we have little patience to let a smoked cheese sit and the whole block is usually gone by the end of the week.

Equipment

- Smoker
- Apple Wood Chips
- Aluminium Foil

Ingredients

- Cheese

Instructions

Step 1- Turn your smoker on or light your smoker. Place your wood chips in the smoker and let the smoker heat up to 60-80F.

Step 2- Place the cheese on tinfoil and into the smoker onto the top rack. Smoke 1.5 hours. Check on your cheese frequently to make sure it is not melting.

Step 3- Remove from smoker. Enjoy now or up to two weeks later. The smoke flavour will continue to intensify as the cheese sits.

Brie

Equipment

- Stainless Steal Pot with Lid
- Spoon
- Knife
- Cheese Forms (See Brie Size Guide)
- Drying Rack
- Plastic wrap or cheese wrap paper
- Large Tupperware container
- Shiska bob sticks or cheese drying mat that will fit in your Tupperware container
- Regular Refrigerator
- Kitchen Scale

Ingredients

- 2 Gallons Milk
- 1/4 tsp Mesophilic Culture
- 1/4 tsp Penicillium Candidum
- 1/4 tsp Calcium Chloride (Only if using pasteurized milk)
- 1/4 tsp Liquid Rennet (or enough to coagulate 2 gallons of milk)
- Fine Ground Salt
- Water (Be sure that all water used in this recipe is non-chlorinated)

Instructions

Step 1- Thoroughly clean and sterilize all equipment and surfaces.

Step 2- Warm milk to 90F. Sprinkle Mesophilic culture and Penicillium culture over the surface of the milk and let rehydrate for 5 min. Incorporate Culture into milk with an up and down stirring motion. *If using Cheese Needs culture, from the Christmas Cheesemaking Kit, use the floralac as your mesophilic culture using package directions.*

Step 3- Dilute Calcium Chloride in 1/4 cup lukewarm water. Incorporate into milk. (Only if you are using pasteurized milk)

Step 4- Dilute Rennet in 1/4 lukewarm water. Incorporate into milk with an up and down stirring motion. Cover pot and let ripen for 30 min - 1 hour.

Step 5- Check for a clean break. Using a knife, cut curds into 1 inch cubes. Let sit for 5 min between each layer of cuts. This whole cutting process will take 10-15 min. (See Tip 2 on pg 64)

Step 6- Using your spoon, gently stir curds for 10 min, being careful not to break up the curds. They will start to shrink as the whey is released from them. At the end of 10 min, they will still be very soft and will be about 1/2 inch cubes. When pressed between your fingers, they will break apart easily and should feel a lot like a pouched egg. When dropped from 30cm they should bounce slightly rather than splat.

Step 7- Place your forms on a drying rack. Using the forms, scoop the curds from the cheese pot.

Step 8- Allow curds to drain in forms for 12 hours at room temperature, flipping two or three times during this period.

Step 9- Remove cheeses from forms and surface salt your cheese with fine ground salt. Use 1 tbsp of fine ground salt for every 1 lb of cheese. (Ex. If your cheese weighs 0.5 lbs, evenly salt the surface with 0.5 tbsp of fine ground salt.) Place cheeses back in cheese forms for another 12 hours.

Step 10- Once your cheeses feel firm and like they will maintain
their shape (usually takes a total of 24hours in the forms), line the bottom of your ripening container with a ripening mat and place cheeses in container, with the lid of the container very loosely covering your cheeses.

Step 11- At this point I usually leave my cheeses in the ripening container in a cool spot in my house for about a week. If your house is hot, you can use the refrigerator for this time, just keep in mind that your cheeses white mold will take about a week longer to develop if left in the refrigerator verses a cool spot in the house.

Flip your cheeses daily and monitor the humidity in your ripening container. I monitor humidity very simply by making sure that I have some condensation on the roof of my ripening container. If you start to notice that the condensation is diminishing, place a crumpled up wet paper towel in the container.

Step 12- A white mold will start to appear after 1 week and should have fully covered your cheese by 2 weeks. It may come in spotty in places where you surface salted a little too heavily. It will come in eventually, just give it a bit of time. Once the white mold starts to form, be sure to pat this mold down when you do your daily flip of your cheeses.

Step 13- After 2 weeks, or as soon as the surface of your cheeses have a full white coat of mold, remove your cheese from the ripening container. Wrap them in plastic wrap (or cheese ripening paper if you have it), and continue to ripen for up to 4 weeks in your refrigerator.

Flip them a few times a week. After 4 weeks they should be ready to enjoy. If you have made various sizes of bries, you will notice that the smaller, thinner bries are ready first. They may be ready as soon as 2-3 weeks after ripening. You will know that they are ripened properly when they have softened significantly and they have turned a yellowish colour.

Not ready to eat them yet? They will keep at least another few weeks in the refrigerator, but be diligent to not let them go farther than that, or you may notice they develop an ammonia flavour and smell.

NOTES ABOUT BRIE

- Bries that have over ripened will develop an ammonia flavour and taste. If you have made various sizes of brie, keep an eye on the smaller bries as they will ripen quicker than their larger counterparts. You know that a brie is ripe when it softens to the touch and turns more of a yellow colour.

- If your cheese becomes hard on the drying rack or in the ripening container, even if it has a white coat or develops one, it probably will not soften. This is why maintaining the humidity in your ripening container is important. Bries are very good at maintaining their own humidity because of their white mold coats, all you have to do is make sure they have some condensation on the roof of your ripening container.

- Bries can have too much humidity. If you notice that there is excessive condensation on the lid of the ripening container, if you notice that your cheeses are physically wet, or are dripping, the humidity is too high. This can lead to problems like slip skin, cat fur mold growth or pink/yellow mold growth.

- If your cheeses experience slip skin (toad skin) you will notice that the white mold coat starts to separate from the cheese. This can be caused by several problems including rapid geotrichium candiditum growth, increased humidity or too high of temperature. As long as your cheeses didn't get too hot, you can still save them. Lower the humidity in the ripening container. If the cheeses have a complete or almost complete white coat, wrap them immediately and move to the refrigerator. This defect most often causes a cosmetic problem rather than a taste problem.

- If you notice mold growth other than white mold, this can be caused by a few different things. Brie is very good at controlling unwanted mold because the white mold is so dominant. Brie cheeses commonly are able to grow nice white coats before any other mold can start growing. Occasionally you may notice other molds starting to grow. If this happens, the first step is to rectify the cause and try to stop the contamination from happening. Below I have listed a few of the more common molds that will contaminate your cheese.

- Green mold is often caused by dirty or contaminated drying racks, if you have noticed the green mold early, cut it off and clean the ripening area. If it has become extensive, your cheese will be ruined. Green mold tastes terrible!

- Pink mold can be caused by too high of humidity. I don't consider pink mold safe, it can wreak havoc on your urinary tract and as brie is a very soft cheese and easily penetrated, I toss out any cheeses that develop pink mold. If you do have a pink mold contamination, consider it a learning experience and lower the humidity for next time!

- Cat fur mold. You have to do what you are comfortable with, but I consider cat fur mold (though intimidating as it looks) safe for consumption. If I develop a cat fur contamination, I assume that the humidity in my ripening container is too high, or I have forgotten to salt my cheese (it happens!) I lower the humidity, or rectify the salt problem, and wait for the white mold to take back control of the cheese.

- Blue mold. If you commonly make blue cheeses or have had moldy sourdough in your kitchen, your brie may develop a blue mold contamination. This is where you pat yourself on the back and say job well done! You have just created a blue brie! It will be delicious! If you don't want this to happen again however, do a thorough clean of all of your ripening area, and kitchen. Blue mold is invasive and can be tricky to get rid of!

BRIE Size Chart

If you want to get technical, Bries are large and Camemberts are small. Both cheeses originate from France and are well known cheeses around the world. The making of these cheeses is very similar and in my opinion, if you are not standing in France making these cheeses, the names really don't matter too much. Brie comes from a region known as Brie and Camemberts come from Normandy.

What you are making is a soft white mold ripened cheese and you can make it whatever size you want and use whatever materials you have, to make that happen.

OPTIONS

- Store bought cheese forms; All cheese supply websites carry cheese forms and you can buy a variety of sizes. In most cases they are plastic.

- Plastic containers; Old yogurt containers are perfect for this. They can be square or round. Punch holes in the bottom and sides of them using a nail or knife. Poke the holes from the inside out to ensure that the groves of the holes are facing out.

- Baskets made from natural material; They are difficult to clean, but natural material has been used for years as cheese forms. The idea is that the natural material and the healthy cheese that you make within the material allows for protection from unwanted bacteria. If you would like to read more, check out David Ashers book, The Art of Natural Cheesemaking. Or join the milkmaid society as we are learning how to weave baskets in December.

- Clay forms; Clay is an excellent material for making cheese because it allows the curd to stay warm longer, which facilitates drainage. *Stay tuned for more details on a clay cheese form collaboration through Cheese From Scratch in late 2023 or 2024.*

Size

- For me the ideal brie is no thicker than 1.5 inches high and no thinner than 3/4 inch.

- Keep in mind when choosing brie forms and when filling them, that the curd will reduce by at least 1/2- 1/4. If you accidentally make a brie that is too thick, consider cutting it in half before salting or removing it from the form early (after 12 hours or so) to allow it to collapse down. If you accidentally make a brie that is too thin, consider eating it as a fresh cheese, or keep an eye on it as it will ripen rapidly compared to its counterparts.

- The more surface area that the cheese has, the faster it will ripen. Remember, the mold on the outer coat of your cheese is allowing it to ripen from the outside in. This means that a cheese that has a circumference of 12 inches and is only 0.5 inches high, will ripen much quicker than a cheese that has a circumference of 5 inches and is 1 inch high.

Example of Ripening Times

2 inches across and 1 inch high will ripen in 3 -4 weeks
6 inches across and 1 inch high will ripen in 3-4 weeks
2 inches across and 2 inches high will ripen in 6-8 weeks
6 inches across and 2 inches high will ripen in 6-8 weeks

Fresh Cheeses

Quark

Quark is a basic cream cheese recipe that uses milk instead of full cream. This is a very versatile recipe and can be used to make hand cheese, become the basis for cheese balls or can simply be spread on a plate with balsamic jelly and served as an appetizer. To make a creamier version of this, substitute some of the milk in the recipe for heavy cream.

Equipment

- Pot or Gallon Jar
- Spoon
- Strainer
- Cheese Cloth

Ingredients

- 1 gallon milk (to make a creamier cheese, dilute this milk with cream or even use full cream).
- 2 tbsp well fed Clabber OR 1/8 tsp Mesophilic Culture
- 1/8 tsp Calcium Chloride (Only if using pasteurized milk)
- 1/8 Liquid Rennet (or enough Rennet to coagulate 1 gallon of milk)
- Salt

Instructions

Step 1- Thoroughly clean and sterilize all equipment and surfaces.

Step 2- Pour fresh warm milk into a gallon jar. If you are using cold milk, warm milk up to between 70-80F. Add in clabber culture and incorporate.

Or

Alternatively, if not using clabber, sprinkle mesophilic culture over the surface of the milk and let rehydrate for 5 min before incorporating into the milk.

Step 3- Dilute Calcium Chloride in 1/4 cup lukewarm water. Incorporate into milk. (Only if you are using pasteurized milk)

Step 4- Dilute Rennet in 1/4 lukewarm water. Incorporate into milk with an up and down stirring motion.

Step 5- Put lid on jar and let sit on counter for 12-24 hours.

Step 6- Transfer curd mass to cloth lined colander and let drain for 6 hour or until desired consistency is achieved.

Step 7- Knead in salt to taste. Quark will keep for up to 2 weeks in the refrigerator and freezes well.

"One of my favourite ways to enjoy Quark is mixed with spices and drizzled with olive oil."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and Ba
ALL NATURAL
GLUTEN FREE

Hand Cheese

This simple cheese recipe is an excellent way to dress up your quark! Eat immediately or let age a few weeks in the fridge for better flavour development.

Instructions

Step 1- Proceed with Quark recipe until the straining step (6). Strain curd mass until you are able to pick up a handful of curds, squeeze it in your fist, and it sticks together leaving peaks where your fingers squeezed.

Step 2- Measure 1 tbsp salt for every 1 lb of cheese and knead into curds.

Step 3- Shape curds into burger size patties and roll in your choice of spices. Some of our favourites are fresh ground peppercorns and Italian seasoning.

Step 4- Move cheeses to a plastic storage container and keep the lid slightly ajar. Put into the refrigerator. Check on them every few days to make sure that there is slight condensation on the roof of the container, but that they are not dripping wet. The purpose of this is to keep them soft and prevent them from drying out. You may consume them anytime, but we like to let ours age for two weeks. I have also had success with just wrapping them in plastic wrap as soon as I role them in spices and transferring them to the fridge for a few weeks before enjoying.

When you eat them (as long as you didn't let them get too dry) they will taste soft and the herbs will have infused into the cheeses making them taste like the best cheese ball you have ever eaten!

Bocconcini

Bocconcini are tiny mozzarella balls. Think little appetizers. You can string them onto a stick with some basil a cherry tomato and drizzle them in balsamic vinegar. It all sounds very fancy!
We love Bocconcini in our house and I make them often. The trouble is, I am most often making large batches of mozzarella, and Bocconcini unless you have an immediate use for them, can be time consuming to make. That is why I don't often make Bocconcini the day that I am making cheese. Instead I make my mozzarella as I normally would, freeze it into strips and then pull those strips out on the day that I want to make bocconcini. Boil a kettle of water, dump it overtop of the thawed or partially thawed mozzarella strips, leave them for a few minutes before stretching them into tiny balls. This technique makes bocconcini a make ahead recipe, all you have to do is pull those mozzarella strips out a few hours before appetizer time!
In this book I have listed Mozzarella two ways. The first way is a streamlined easy way to make mozzarella fast. It uses citric acid to acidify the milk rather than relying on a bacteria. This makes the process much quicker and results in a yummy, easy cheese. The second way is a naturally acidified mozzarella. Instead of relying on a direct acid like citric acid, it uses a natural bacteria to ferment the sugar in the milk into lactic acid. This process, as you can imagine, is much longer, but it results in a very soft luxurious cheese and is my personal preference for fancy appetizers.

Whatever method you choose, will result in a yummy cheese!

Citric Acid Mozzarella

I make a big batch of this recipe, using 6 gallons of milk, and shred and freeze the extras. 1 gallon of good quality whole raw milk, will yield approximately 1 lb. of cheese.

Equipment

- Stainless Steal Pot with Lid
- Wooden spoon or Heat resistant rubber gloves
- Knife

Ingredients

- 1- 1.5 tsp citric acid powder (if you are using older milk us 1 tsp, fresh milk use 1.5 tsp)
- 1 gallon Cows Milk
- 1/4 tsp Calcium Chloride (only if using pasteurized milk)
- 1/4 tsp Liquid Rennet (or if using a different form of rennet, use package directions for coagulating one gallon of milk)
- Salt (See Salting options)

Instructions

Step 1- Thoroughly clean and sterilize all equipment and surfaces.

Step 2- Dissolve Citric Acid in a 1/4 cup Luke warm water. In a pot, combine milk and citric acid. Heat to 90F, stirring occasionally to prevent scorching. Turn off heat. *You must add the citric acid before heating or you risk making ricotta instead!*

Step 3- Dilute Calcium Chloride in 1/4 cup lukewarm water. Incorporate into milk. (Only if you are using pasteurized milk)

Step 4- Dilute Rennet in 1/4 lukewarm water. Incorporate into milk with an up and down stirring motion. Cover pot and let ripen for 30 min - 1 hour.

Step 5- Check for a Clean break. If you notice that your curd mass has sunk below a layer of whey, your curd has acidified to the stretching stage already! Complete step 6 before moving directly to step Step 11.

Step 6- Using a knife, cut curds into 1 inch cubes. Let sit for 5 min between each layer of cuts. This whole cutting process will take 10-15 min. (See Tip 2)

Step 7- Gently stir curds for 20- 40 min. If your whey becomes cold, warm it up slightly to 100F. This step is not imperative for making mozzarella but it significantly helps with texture in the final result. At this point your curds should be about the size of a kidney bean and when squeezed between your hands they clump together.

Step 8- Let sit for 5 minutes, until curds have sunk to the bottom of the pot.

Step 9- Scoop out about half of the whey, leaving approximately 3 inches of whey above the curds.

Step 10- Add salt to the pot (or alternatively skip this step and use the easy shredding technique)

Step 11– Turn the heat to medium. Using a wooden spoon, gently stir to prevent scorching, start to heat the whey. As the heat of the whey gets higher, pay attention to the curds. When they reach a point where they start to stretch without breaking and have clumped together into a mass, turn off the heat.

Step 12– Using a wooden spoon or heat resistant rubber gloves, slowly start to knead the cheese under the hot whey. As soon as it starts stretching you can do 1 of 3 things.

1. Pull and fold chunks of cheese into mozzarella balls. Be careful not to overwork these balls. I liken the technique of forming mozzarella balls to making buns. Submerge them in a cold water bath after stretching to keep them round. Make some of them into tiny Bocconcini balls!
2. As soon as your cheese begins to stretch, knead the mass of curd a few times before transferring the whole mass to a holed cheese form. Use my easy shredding technique to make this into shreddable mozzarella cheese (pg. 64).
3. As soon as the cheese begins to stretch begin folding and pulling the cheese into a long rope. This is string cheese!

Step 13– To salt your cheese you have 3 options.

1. Add about 1/2 cup of salt to the whey while you stretch your cheese.
2. Use the easy shredding technique! (pg. 64)
3. Surface salt your cheese. Sprinkle a small amount of salt onto the surface of your cheese and enjoy right away!

Troubleshooting

Cheesemaking takes practice, and for whatever reason, things do not always turn out as planned (even for people who are experienced). The amazing thing about cheese, is that even if it turns out different than you are intending, it can almost always be used for something.

Flimsy Curd : If your curd does not firm up enough to create a clean break, or if you cut the curds too early and they fall apart during the stirring stage. They may not be able to turn into mozzarella, but strain them through a cloth lined colander, and use it as ricotta. Next time, ensure that you achieve a clean break, before cutting the curds, but if the curds just are not setting well, consider adding calcium chloride before adding the rennet.

Overcooked curd: In step 11, if you miss the stretching phase, and overcook your curds, they will essentially turn into cheddar cheese curds. At this point, they are no longer able to stretch as they would have before, and they will not clump together. Though they will not become string cheese at this point, you can still use them to top a poutine, or eat for a snack. Next time, heat the curds slower in step 11, and pay close attention to when they start to clump together and stretch.

Naturally Acidified Mozzarella

For a long time I have used naturally acidified mozzarella as a rescue recipe for pots of curds that have become forgotten on the stove. How many times have I started a morning making cheese, only to be pulled away from the pot for hours after already adding the culture and rennet?! The principals of this mozzarella recipe can be used as either a rescue recipe or a stand alone recipe.

Equipment

- Stainless Steel Pot with Lid
- Wooden spoon or Heat resistant rubber gloves
- Knife

Ingredients

- 1 gallon Cows Milk (Unfortunately goats milk does not give the same stretch as cows)
- 1/4 cup well cared for Clabber OR 1/4 tsp mesophilic culture.
- 1/4 tsp Calcium Chloride (only if using pasteurized milk)
- 1/4 tsp Liquid Rennet (or if using a different form of rennet, use package directions for coagulating one gallon of milk)
- Salt (See Salting options)

"Naturally acidified mozzarella takes extra time, but for me, the difference in taste and texture is huge!"

Instructions

Step 1- Thoroughly clean and sterilize all equipment and surfaces.

Step 2- Warm milk to 90F. Add in Clabber culture and stir to incorporate

OR

If using freeze dried culture, sprinkle culture over the surface of the milk and let rehydrate for 5 min. Incorporate Culture into milk with an up and down stirring motion.

Step 3- Dilute Calcium Chloride in 1/4 cup lukewarm water. Incorporate into milk. (Only if you are using pasteurized milk)

Step 4- Dilute Rennet in 1/4 lukewarm water. Incorporate into milk with an up and down stirring motion. Cover pot and let ripen for 30 min - 1 hour.

Step 5- Check for a clean break. Using a knife, cut curds into 1 inch cubes. Let sit for 5 min between each layer of cuts. This whole cutting process will take 10-15 min. (See Tip 2)

Step 6-Gently stir curds for a few minutes. Work to get all large chunks in the pot down to a similar size of 1 inch cubes. After a few minutes of stirring, take a curd from the pot, (whom's size represents the majority of the curds in the pot) hold it 30 cm above the counter and let it drop. If it splats into a bunch of pieces, stir the curds for a few more minutes. However if it bounces slightly, you are ready to move on to the next step.

Step 7- Put the lid on the pot and let rest for 3-5 hours. Depending on the warmth of your house, the quality of the starter culture and the milk, you will want to start checking your culture to see if it will stretch after about 3 hours but I usually don't expect a stretch until 5.

To check if it will stretch boil a small amount of hot water. Submerge one of the curds into the hot water and let rest for 1 min. Using a fork to lift the curd out of the pot gently begin dipping the curd in and out of the hot water as you would dip a tea bag in and out of a cup of tea. Up, down, up, down. Do this until the curd breaks. If the curd does not break, but instead stretches indefinitely (I'm talking, you could stretch it to the roof), it is ready to move on to the next step.

You will most likely have to do this stretch test more than once throughout the course of the next few hours. You will notice that the cheese does begin to stretch more and more, but it is not ready until it no longer breaks off, but instead stretches almost indefinitely until the weight of the bottom curd inevitably pulls the stretch apart.

Imagine the ultimate cheese pull! That is what you are looking for. When you do finally achieve the ultimate stretch, you have a very short window to catch it. If it goes too far, it will no longer stretch, so plan to move onto the next step as soon as possible and for sure within the hour.


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Step 8- To stretch your cheese boil a 8 quart pot of water.
Dip the whey off of your curd mass, and pour off any remaining whey.

Pour approximately half of the boiling water onto your curd mass. Using a wooden spoon or heat resistant rubber gloves, slowly start to knead the cheese under the hot water. As soon as it starts stretching you can do 1 of 3 things.

1. Pull and fold chunks of cheese into mozzarella balls. Be careful not to overwork these balls. I liken the technique of forming mozzarella balls to making buns. Submerge them in a cold water bath after stretching to keep them round. Make some of them into tiny Bocconcini balls!
2. As soon as your cheese begins to stretch, knead the mass of curd a few times before transferring the whole mass to a holed cheese form. Use my easy shredding technique to make this into shreddable mozzarella cheese. (pg. 64)
3. As soon as the cheese begins to stretch begin folding and pulling the cheese into a long rope. This is string cheese!

Step 9- To salt your cheese you have 3 options.

1. Make a light 2% brine using the reserved whey. Store your cheese in this brine in the fridge. This sometimes results in a slimy cheese, so I do prefer other methods of salting.
2. Use the easy shredding technique! Listed below.
3. Surface salt your cheese. Sprinkle a small amount of salt onto the surface of your cheese and enjoy right away!

Easy Shredding Technique

Anyone who has ever tried to shred fresh mozzarella for pizza, knows that it is a nightmare to shred! It breaks off into large chunks and is cause for serious frustration if you are just looking for an easy shreddable cheese.

To complete the easy shredding technique skip the salting of mozzarella during making but instead after your curd is stretched, move onto these steps.

Step 1- My favourite way to complete the easy shredding technique, is to transfer my entire curd mass into a holed form. While the cheese is in the form, sprinkle a light dusting of salt onto the surface of the cheese, let it drain for about 10 minutes before flipping it over and doing the same on the other side. This light salting will aid in drainage.

Step 2- After an additional 10 minutes, transfer your cheese to your 18% brine. You can brine it at the ratio of 2 hours per pound of cheese. While your cheese is brining let it sit in the refrigerator or a cool area.
If you have made multiple cheeses, weigh each cheese separately and calculate brine time for each cheese.

Step 3- After you remove your cheese from the brine, place it on a plate in the refrigerator for 12 hours to dry. Your cheese will now be easy to shred and freeze, or to cut up into strips and freeze. I like to cut my cheese into 1 inch by 3 inch strips and freeze them for mozzarella sticks, as well as for stretching into Bocconcini balls at a later date.

To make an 18% brine (also known as a saturated brine) Mix 1 part fine ground salt to 5 parts water. When using fine ground salt this can be done by weight or by metric measurement as water and fine ground salt weigh the same. An example: 2 cups fine ground salt: 10 cups water

TIPS

Tip 1

For the first 5 min of stirring. Do not turn on the heat, using a spoon, very gently pull up big chunks of curd from the bottom of the pot, cut them to size, and continue this until the bulk of your curds are a more uniform size. This doesn't have to be perfect, but you want the bulk of them to be similar sizes.

Tip 2

To complete your grid cuts first cut horizontal and vertical lines across your pot. At this point the curds will look like 1 inch pillars. Wait 5 min before cutting underneath the surface of the milk to make your pillars into 1 inch cubes, before letting them rest for another 5 min. By letting your curds rest after this series of grid cuts this will allow your curds to firm up nicely. This whole grid cutting stage takes about 10 minutes.

Cheese Board Menu

Bocconcini Appetizer

Ingredients

- Bocconcini
- Fresh basil
- Cherry Tomatoes
- Optional; Bread cubes
- Balsamic Vinegar.

Instructions

Step 1- String Bocconcini, Basil, Tomatoes and optional bread cubes onto toothpicks.

Step 2- Drizzle with balsamic vinegar directly before serving.

Quark Jam Board

This is a perfect pull from the freezer use for Quark. It feels fancy, but its actually super simple! Branch and Vines products have been used throughout this ebook in the photos. They did not ask me to use their products in this ebook, I chose too! I love supporting companys that are community mined as well as offer amazing products. This Balsamic Jam is my new favourite thing!

Ingredients

- 1-2 cups Quark
- Caramelized Onion and Balsamic Jam

Instructions

Step 1- Spread Quark on wooden board or plate. Top with jam and serve with crackers.


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Carmeli
and Ba
ALL NATURAL
GLUTEN FREE

Apple Jelly with Brie

Last years Christmas Cheeseboard Ebook contained Zach mom, Maggies, Jalapeno jelly recipe. Maggie's jellies are amazing and as her Apple jelly is our favourite to enjoy with Brie, I asked her if I could include it in this seasons Ebook. As I don't make jelly, I am often shocked at the amount of sugar involved. Unfortunately, due to the integrity of the jelly and its ability to set, the sugar can not be reduced.

Ingredients and Supplies

- 5 lbs apples = 7 cups of apple juice
- 9 cups of sugar
- 1 box pectin
- 1/2 tsp butter
- 5-6 half pint jars, rings and lids

Instructions

Step 1- Prepare lids and 1/2 pint jars for canning.

Step 2- Cut apples into small pieces. There is no need to peel or core your apples, but discard the stems.

Step 3- Place chopped apples in a large saucepan and add 5 cups of water.

Step 4- Bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover and simmer for 10 minutes.

Step 5- Crush cooked apples and again cover and simmer for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Step 6- Place 3 layers of damp cheesecloth or jelly bag in to a large bowl. Pour prepared apples into the cheesecloth. Tie the cheesecloth closed, hang and let drip into a bowl until the dripping stops. Press gently.

Step 7- Measure 7 cups of apple juice into a saucepan. It is important that this number is exact. If you do not have 7 cups of juice you may add up to 1/2 cup of water to get the exact amount of juice needed.

Step 8- Measure 9 cups sugar into a bowl. This is a lot of sugar but it is an important ingredient and should be measured exactly to ensure setting of the jelly.

Step 9- Stir 1 box of pectin into the juice. Add 1/2 tsp butter to reduce foaming.

Step 10- Bring mixture to a full rolling boil on high heat. (A boil that does not stop rolling when stirred).

Step 11- Stir in sugar quickly. Return to rolling boil and boil for 1 min stirring constantly.

Step 12- Remove from heat and skim off foam.

Step 13- Ladle quickly into hot prepared jars, leaving 1/8 inch headspace. Wipe jar rims and place lids and bands on each jar. Using a hot water bath process for 5 min.

Alternatively, if you are a rebel canner, you can skip the hot water bath method and flip the jars upside down for 5 min before flipping them back upright. This is something that Maggie has done for years with her jelly, the heat from the jar will seal the lid but this is not an approved canning method, so use at your own discretion.

Step 14- After jars cool, check seals of your jars by pressing the middle to make sure they have sealed properly.

Step 15- Let stand at room temperature for 24 hours. If you have any jars that don't seal, you can re process them or move them to the refrigerator.

To Serve, remove Brie from fridge several hours before serving. Serve brie alongside the apple jelly with a selection of crackers or bread. This is one of our favourite snacks to enjoy throughout the winter.

Making A Christmas Cheese Board

When serving Christmas cheeses there are a few things to keep in mind that will help to elevate your cheese to the next level.

Serve your cheese at room temperature.

Let your cheeses come to room temperature before serving. This will greatly enhance the flavours that they have to offer.

Unwrap your cheese well before serving time.

Cheeses benefit from a little “airing out” before serving.

Serve with your favourite snacks: Crackers, Nuts, Fruit, Pickled Vegetables, Meats, Dips and Jams


Tag

Conclusion

I hope that this Christmas Cheeseboard Ebook has inspired you to try making some of your own cheeses this season. As Homestead Cheesemakers, cheesemaking is part of our everyday life. Much like our great grandmothers years before us, we milk our cows, and prepare the daily cheese as a part of our everyday tasks. Though, I would not call it mundane, it can become regular and a desire to create something unique calls.
I hope that this project filled your home with joy. I hope that it fed your bellies and your spirits, and at the end of the day when you finally sat down to your beautiful homemade cheeses, I hope that you were surrounded by the people you love.

–Robyn


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12:40
Sunday, December 25
SHARE YOUR CREATIONS
Tag @cheese_from_scratch_ in your Christmas creations so I can see what you make!

Disclaimer

The recipes and techniques in this book have been carefully tested by myself in my own kitchen. To the best of my knowledge, they are safe for ordinary use. For people with allergies, or compromised immune systems, please proceed with caution and use your own discretion. I take no legal responsibility for any hazard, loss or damage that may result from any technique or recipe listed in this book.

As such, to the best of my knowledge, the information in this book is factual and evidence based. That being said, I am a self taught cheesemaker, and I base my cheesemaking highly on common sense and personal experience. Dairy is a controlled substance in many parts of the world, please consult your jurisdictions dairy guidelines and follow them. Please take the information you find in this book, as my personal opinion only and note that it does not represent the opinion of any other person, business or governing body.

Please Note this book was revised for 2023

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