



THE BEVERAGE PEOPLE

Coastal California Blue Cheese

This is the second blue cheese recipe for The Beverage People. Our other recipe, Petaluma Blue, resembles the Stilton of England; strong flavors and aromas with a blue rind. A different style of blue cheese is found on the North Coast of California and that is what this recipe represents. After you make one, you might want to try the other, just to see the delightful differences you can achieve.

I was inspired to make this cheese by two factors. The acquisition of a better refrigerator/cave with temperature control and a pH meter to employ commercial cheesemaking practices in my kitchen. The results have been well worth the investment. The pH meter is only used for the first couple of days, while the "cave" is used for the first 30 days of ripening until the cheese can be wrapped and stored in a regular refrigerator.

If you do not have a pH meter, time guidelines are provided for each step.



Tips: You can make a warmer environment by placing the cheese into a small cupboard with a jar of warm water that you replace regularly or with a low wattage lamp in a small area. To make cave conditions you can run a spare fridge warmer - to 50°F - by employing a device called a temperature controller... or get a dedicated wine bottle storage fridge and set the temperature as needed – the range available on these units fits cheesemaking to a T.

Ingredients

1 gallon whole cow's milk (not ultra pasteurized)
1 cup (1/2 pint) heavy whipping cream (not ultra pasteurized)
1/32 tsp. Penicillium roqueforti ripening culture powder
1/8 tsp. MM100 direct set starter mesophilic culture
1/8 tsp. calcium chloride solution, dissolved in 1/4 cup water
1/8 tsp liquid rennet, dissolved in 1/4 cup water
Kosher salt or flaked cheese salt

Equipment

Production:

6-10 quart pan inset to a water bath pan
2 Dial Top Thermometers
Stainless perforated ladle or spoon
Measuring spoons including 1/8 and smaller
2 small glass bowls
Colander
1/2 yard cheesecloth
pH Meter with 4 and 7 Buffer Solutions

Forming and aging:

1 cheese mold No Bottom (4.5 Base x 4.5 Top x 4.25 H)
Draining tray and mat
Size #2 (3 mm) Aluminum knitting needle
Ripening box and lid
Temperature Controlled area for 50-55°F (for 2-3 weeks)

Method

1. Prepare a water bath with the water to 85-88°F, add the milk and cream to the inset pan.
2. Heat milk to 85-86° F.
3. Gently stir in the starter and ripening cultures.
4. Ripen milk for about 2 hours to pH 6.50-6.60.
5. Stir in the diluted calcium chloride. Stir in the diluted rennet. The first sign of milk gelling into curd should be in 12-15 minutes. Multiply this time by 4 to get the time from adding rennet to cutting the curd, e.g. 15 min. x 4 = 60 min. If it is longer to set, plan to wait longer for cutting. It is important to get a good set before cutting. The whey pH should be 6.4-6.5.
6. Cut the curd into hazelnut-sized particles. Settle curds for 10 minutes.
7. Stir gently for about a minute every 5 minutes or so, for 30-40 minutes. Maintain temperature at 85-86° F. Settle curds under whey until whey decreases to pH 6.20-6.30.
8. Drain whey completely from curds. The more the curds are drained, the more open the cheese texture will be. A colander lined with cheesecloth can be used for the best separation of curds and whey. Work the curds gently on the cloth until the whey is removed.
9. Place the Mold onto a draining mat on the draining tray and place into the ripening box for drainage. Spoon or ladle the curds into the mold immediately to prevent cooling. Cover and keep the room temperature at 68-70° F.
10. Turn the cheese over every 15 min. during the first hour and then every 30 min. for the next three hours. Leave overnight, maintaining 68-70° F.
11. The next day the cheese is turned two times as the cheese reaches pH 4.70-4.80. Continue to maintain humidity of 80% and a temperature of 68-70° F.
12. The next day move the box to the ripening room at pH 4.70-4.80 for salting. (50° F., 95-98%RH, and



moderate ventilation.)

13. Salting is done by hand with medium coarse flake salt. Weigh the cheese and multiply the gram weight by the percentage of salt to use. Divide this by 100 to get grams of salt to use. Repeat each day of salting.

Day 1. Place the cheese on wax paper and rub with salt equal to 3.5% of the cheese weight. (Approx. 20-25 g)

Day 2. Rub cheese with salt equal to 2.5% of the cheese weight. (Approx. 15-18 g) Turn the wheel over.

Day 3. Rub cheese with salt equal to 1.25% of the cheese weight. (Approx. 7-8 g) Turn the wheel over.

Day 4. Prepare the ripening box for the cheese during the blue

cheese bloom. Keep the cheese on a drain mat with a clean, damp paper towel under it and around the side of the ripening box to keep the humidity high. Needle the cheese with a 1/8 inch (3mm) needle to make holes spaced 3/4 inch apart. Do one side and then the other with several holes along the circumference as well. Cover loosely.



Day 5-25. Continue storing at 50° F. and 85-90% RH. Turn the cheese over every 4-5 days and wipe with very clean damp/dry paper towel to encourage the blue mold growth.

Day 26-30 Wrap wedges of the cheese in cheese paper or aluminum foil. Refrigerate. Ripen for another 30 - 45 days and then enjoy!