



THE BEVERAGE PEOPLE

Crescenza

This is a delicious mild cow's milk cheese originally from Italy. It is made to be soft and creamy with a very high moisture level. Therefore, it is meant to be eaten within a week or two.

Ingredients:

- 2 gallons good quality whole cow's milk
- 1/4 tsp. Aroma B
- 1/4 tsp. calcium chloride diluted in 1/4 cup nonchlorinated water
- 1/4 tsp. rennet diluted in 1/4 cup nonchlorinated water
- Kosher salt (preferably Diamond Crystal)

Equipment:

- 10 qt. nonreactive stock pot
- dial top thermometer
- stainless perforated spoon or ladle
- 1/4 tsp. measuring spoon
- 2 small glass bowls
- curd cutting knife
- cheesecloth
- 7 inch square Taleggio mold
- draining tray and mat

Sanitize all your equipment and supplies first.

In a heavy nonreactive 10-quart pot, heat the milk to 90° F. over very low heat. Turn off the heat.

Sprinkle the Aroma B over the milk. Cover and let sit for 5 mins. Gently stir from top to bottom for 20 strokes. Cover and let sit for 30 minutes while maintaining the temperature at 90° F.

Add the diluted calcium chloride and stir as before. Then add the diluted rennet and stir up and down very gently for 60 seconds. Cover and let sit for 45-60 minutes until you are sure of a clean break in the curd mass. It is ok if the temperature drops a few degrees but if you fear it will drop too much, put the pot in the sink with warm water surrounding it.

When the curd has formed, it is time to cut it to begin releasing the whey.

First cut: Cut vertically, first one way and then the other to square pieces that are about one square inch in size. Now let it rest for 15 minutes before doing the second cut. You should see whey releasing along the cut lines. The whey should be a clear yellowish color.

Second cut: The cutting for the horizontal should be done gently so you don't disturb the first cut any more than necessary. Again, aim for one inch cuts. Now you want to stir very gently every so often to keep these soft curds from matting as they continue to release whey for 10-15 minutes. Then let them settle to the bottom of the pot. Ladle off whey to the top of the curds.

Place a Taleggio mold on a draining rack set over something to catch the whey. I do this over the kitchen sink with a wide pot under the draining rack. Line the mold with cheesecloth and gently ladle the curds into the mold, pushing them gently into the corners. Cover the curds with the tails of the cheesecloth and let it drain for 3 hours. At this point, keep your cheese as warm as possible (75-78° is perfect). Room temperature will work (it will probably take a little longer to drain) but warmer will develop the flavor better. After 3 hrs., lift the cheesecloth and cheese out of the mold, unwrap the cheese, flip it over, rewrap and put back in the mold for another 3 hours.

When I last made this cheese, my kitchen was about 70° so I put a small lamp next to the cheese (with a 100W bulb in it). Within an hour the temperature by the cheese was up to 74°.

While the cheese is draining, prepare your brine. Make enough to completely cover your cheese in a plastic container in the ratio of 13 oz. of salt to 1 gallon of water (for the container I use, 1/2 gallon of water and 6.5 oz. of salt is enough).

Unwrap the cheese and put in the brine for 2 hrs., turning after one hour.

Remove the cheese from the brine and pat dry. Place on a draining rack to air dry and continue to drain for about an hour at room temperature. Then put in the refrigerator to chill before wrapping for it will continue to drain. You can vacuum seal and it will last for up to a month. If using within a week, just keep it in a lidded plastic container as you do feta for it will continue to drain. This cheese will continue to soften over time and is quite spreadable and meltable!

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