

Farmhouse Chive Cheddar

There is a wide variety of cheeses known as cheddars. Some of the most familiar ones such as American Brick or Colby are considered American classics, created here in the US. The capitol of cheddar cheeses is the UK; known for Caerphilly, Irish Cheddar, and many others. Cheddars might be the color of the milk used, or orange if colored with natural annatto liquid. Cheddars are often flavored with dried herbs, fruits, soaked in beer or whiskey, or smoked.

This farmhouse cheese is a beautiful, rustic Cheddar made without using the traditional and slightly more involved *cheddaring* process of milling the curds before shaping and pressing. Annatto and dried chives are added for flavor and create a lovely color complement to each other. Orange color will intensify as the cheese ages. If waxed and aged for only 1 month, the cheese will be creamy and moist. For those new to aging cheeses, waxing is the best method for protecting the cheese while it quietly ages inside the waxed exterior.

If you choose to cloth-bandage it, and allow good mold to grow, the cheese would then be allowed to ripen in a cellar environment for 3 months; developing flavor and transforming into a classic, crumbly cheddar. You can use this recipe for making a simple farmhouse Cheddar without chives or annatto for a simple, delicious cheese. Goat's milk or mixed milk can be used as well.

Milk: whole cow's milk

Start to Finish:

Making the cheese: 3 hours + 7 hours pressing + 6 hours in brine + 24 hours air drying

Aging: 1 – 3 months

Equipment & Supplies:

8-quart pot for water bath (does not need to be non-reactive)

Non-reactive 6- quart stock pot with lid

Instant-read or dairy thermometer

Measuring spoons

3 small dishes for diluting annatto, calcium chloride, and rennet

Flexible wire, long handle stainless steel whisk

Food- grade flexible blade rubber spatula

Curd-cutting knife or 10 inch cake decorating spatula

Mesh strainer or colander

Butter muslin or cheesecloth

Metal bowl or plastic bucket for draining curds

One 5-inch Tomme or Reblochon mold with follower

Plus

5 # and 10# weights

OR

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A 2-pound Cheese Press (optional)

Food-grade container for brine

Baking sheet, drying rack, and cheese mat for air drying (set up ahead)

Liquid wax

Brush

Cheese wax

Cheesecloth for bandaging (optional)

Cheddar Kit available from The Beverage People. See Resources List

Yields: One 1 pound wheel

Ingredients:

1 gallon whole cow's milk

1/4 teaspoon Meso II starter

1/4 teaspoon liquid annatto diluted in 1/4 cup cool non-chlorinated water

1/4 teaspoon calcium chloride diluted in 1/4 cup cool non-chlorinated water

1/4 teaspoon liquid rennet diluted in 1/4 cup cool non-chlorinated water

1 1/2 teaspoons kosher salt

1 teaspoon dried chives

Butter or Lard (if bandage wrapping rather than waxing)

Brine: Near-saturated 22 % brine: 28 ounces kosher salt to 1 gallon cold non-chlorinated water; stored @ 50-55 degrees F.

Farmhouse Chive Cheddar Steps:

1-Using the water bath method, heat the milk over a low flame to 86 degrees F. Sprinkle the starter over the surface and let rehydrate for 5 minutes. Mix well using a whisk in the up and down motion. Cover and maintaining 86 degrees ripen the milk for 45 minutes.

2-Add the dissolved annatto and stir gently with a whisk using an up-and-down motion for 1 minute.

Add the calcium chloride and whisk in using the same method.

3- Add the dissolved rennet and stir gently with a whisk using an up-and-down motion for 1 minute.

4-Cover and let set off heat, at 86 degrees for 30-45 minutes or until the curds give a clean break when cut with a knife. If no clean break, wait a few minutes more.

5-While maintaining 86 degrees cut the curds into 1/2-inch cubes and let set for 5 minutes.

6-Over low heat, bring the curds to 102 degrees, increasing the temperature slowly over a 20-minute period. Then stir the curds gently for 15 minutes or until they start to firm up. Stir to keep curds from matting together. The curds will be firmed up and the size of a pea.

7-Let the curds rest and sink to the bottom of the pot. Allow the curds to remain undisturbed for 30 minutes.

8- Using a measuring cup, remove enough whey to expose the curds. Stir continuously for 10 minutes or until the curds are matted and cling together when pressed in your hand.

9- Place a strainer or colander over a bowl or bucket large enough to capture the amount of whey. Line it with damp butter muslin and ladle the curds into it. Let drain for 3 minutes then, while warm toss in the salt and chives with your hands and mix thoroughly.

10-Gently transfer the drained curds in cloth to the cheese mold, pull the cloth up tight and smooth out any wrinkles. Cover with the tails of the cloth and press lightly at 8 pounds of pressure for 1 hour. Or place curds in the cheese press and apply the proper pressure.

11-Remove the cheese from the mold, peel away the cheesecloth, turn the cheese over and re-dress with the cheesecloth. Press again at 10 pounds pressure for 6 hours.

12-Make the near-saturated brine by combining the salt and water in a non-corrosive bucket or container with lid. Remove the cheese from the mold and cheesecloth and place in the brine. Cover, and let it soak in refrigeration at 55 degrees for 6 hours, flipping the cheese over once in that time frame.

13- Remove the cheese from the brine and pat dry. Place on a cheese mat set on a rack to air dry at room temperature to set up the rind; approximately 24 hours or until the surface is dry to the touch. Rub off any mold spots that might develop with a piece of cheesecloth rung dry of a salt-distilled vinegar solution used for controlling mold.

14-Wax the cheese and age at 50 degrees F for 4 weeks to 2 months, turning the cheese once a week for even ripening. If waxed, this aging can be done in the vegetable bin at the bottom of your refrigerator.

OR-Bandaging Option: Rub the entire surface with butter or lard and cloth bandage the cheese and place in 55-60 degrees F ripening environment, turning weekly, for 2 to 3 months. Mold will appear on the surface, however much of that is actually growing on the cheesecloth, not the cheese. Brush off any undesirable mold that builds on the cheesecloth during the aging. When ready to consume, the cheesecloth is removed, taking much of the mold with it. If desired, brush off an additional mold that may be on the surface of the cheese.

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Adapted from *Artisan Cheese Making at Home*
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