



THE BEVERAGE PEOPLE

Paneer

This famous cheese from India, also spelled Panir, is amazingly easy to make and very versatile in use. It is one of our Beverage People favorites for demonstrating cheesemaking to friends at home as well as to classes in public. You can make it in the afternoon and eat it for dinner—it's that quick.

Paneer is traditionally presented in one of two ways. Simply drained in cheesecloth or a mesh bag, it forms an irregular ball or lump that can be sliced or crumbled for cooking. Alternatively, the new curds can be pressed to make a flat slab, suitable for cutting into cubes for snacking or cooking. More recently, we have discovered a third way of using paneer, just seasoning the warm curd and serving it with condiments in small flour tortillas (substituting for Indian chapatti bread) as an appetizer. For that one, you can make the cheese right in front of your guests and then serve it to them!

Since this cheese does not melt, it can be sliced and fried or cubed and curried, as in Saag Panir or Lababdar Panir. After it is produced, the cheese will keep for a week or two tightly covered in the refrigerator. One gallon of whole milk yields about 1 ½ lbs. of cheese.

Ingredients

1 gallon whole Cow Milk

1/2 cup fresh lemon juice

1 tsp. Kosher salt

Optional: 1 tsp. curry powder or 1 Tbsp. dried green herbs

Equipment

Stainless Steel Pot, 10-12 qts.

Perforated ladle or slotted spoon

Dial Top Thermometer

Colander

Nylon mesh bag or cheesecloth and string

Stainless Bowl or Glass Bowl

For Pressing:

2 plastic cutting boards

10 lbs. of books

1. Pour the milk into a large enough pot to allow several inches for foaming up.
2. Bring milk to a moderate boil over direct heat. Remove from heat.
3. Immediately stir in the lemon juice (curds form quickly).
4. Stir as the curds clump together. If the whey is still milky, heat a little longer. Let settle for 10 minutes.
5. Line a colander with a nylon mesh bag or a doubled layer of cheesecloth.
6. Ladle the curds into the bag or cheesecloth over a sink or pot to collect the whey.
7. As the curd drains, sprinkle on the salt and any optional herbs or spices. Fold the curd over itself with your perforated ladle to mix thoroughly but gently.

At this point, you may choose one of three ways to proceed:

- a) For warm curd appetizers, scrape the drained curd out of the bag or cheesecloth into a bowl. Serve with small warm flour tortillas or chapattis, along with diced fresh chiles and cilantro.
- b) For a traditional drained ball, twist the bag or cloth to expel more whey. Place a spoon across a pot or bowl and hang the bag from it to allow whey to drain for at least two hours. Scrape finished cheese from the cloth or bag, cover, and refrigerate or use immediately.
- c) For a pressed slab, lay the curd—still in the bag or cheesecloth—on a plastic cutting board beside the sink. Raise the other end of the cutting board by laying it on a wood spoon handle to make a slight slope toward the sink. Press on the curd to flatten it into a rough circle an inch or so thick. Place a second cutting board on top and add 10 lbs. of books. Let stand, draining, for at least 3 hours or overnight. Remove the top board and gently remove the slab from the bag or cloth. Cut in cubes for cooking or storage.