



THE BEVERAGE PEOPLE

Queso Fresco

This is a salty, crumbly pressed white cheese that is very popular in Mexican cuisine. It has the distinction of being a pressed cheese that can be consumed right away.

Try it crumbled on top of enchiladas or refried beans for a tangy treat.

Yields about 1 lb.

Ingredients

- 1 gallon whole Cow Milk
- 1/2 tsp. Mesophilic II Culture
- 1/4 tsp. Liquid Rennet, dissolved in 1/4 cup water
- 1/2 tsp. Calcium Chloride solution, dissolved in 1/4 cup water
- 1-2 Tablespoon Diamond Crystal Salt

Equipment

- Large Enamel or Stainless Steel Pot
- Perforated Ladle or Slotted Spoon
- Dial Top Thermometer
- Curd Cutting Knife
- Cheesecloth for Cheese
- 5 inch Cheese Mold with follower
- Ladle
- 8 lbs. of weight*

Method

First everything must be sanitized.

1. Heat the milk to 90 deg. F. and take it off the heat. This should take about 10 minutes. Add the Mesophilic starter and let it rest for 5 mins. Stir in an up and down motion about 20 times.
2. Add the calcium chloride solution and stir the same way. Then add the rennet solution and stir for one minute.
3. Cover and let sit until a clean break occurs (30-45 minutes).
4. Cut the curd into 1/4-inch cubes.
5. Gradually increase temperature to 95 deg. F over a period of 20 minutes, stirring very gently to keep curds from matting for they are very soft.
6. Let curds rest five minutes, then drain off most of the whey.
7. Line a nonreactive colander with cheesecloth and fill with curds. Let drain for 5 minutes. Then gently stir in at least 1 tablespoon of salt.
8. Transfer the cheesecloth filled with curds to the 5 inch cheese mold. Level out the curds and put in the follower.
9. Press for one hour with 8 lbs.
10. Remove, unwrap, turn over, rewrap, and press for 6 more hours at the same weight.
11. Remove cheese from mold and keep in a covered container in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks or eat it right away!

*A plastic gallon jug full of water weighs 8 lbs. This works well if you don't have flat weights. However, it must be braced so it doesn't fall off of the cheese mold. One way to do this is to put a plate in the bottom of a bucket, put the cheese mold on top, put another plate on top of it and put the gallon jug on top of that. Then use balls of aluminum foil to brace the jug or invert a larger diameter kettle over the whole weight and mold to keep centered.