



THE BEVERAGE PEOPLE

Baby Swiss Cheese

In Switzerland, the cheese we call “Swiss” is best represented by Emmentaler. A pale yellowish cheese with characteristic nutty flavor and “eyes” throughout the wheel, it is the best known of the Alpine cheeses. Traditionally these cheeses were produced during the spring and summer while cattle were in high alpine pastures foraging on meadow grass and wildflowers. After the cheeses aged in caves, they were brought down the mountains on donkey-back for further aging and distribution in the lowlands. It was because of the potential rough handling that Swiss cheesemakers prized a firm, rubbery texture and a sturdy self-developed rind. The “eyes” making up the traditional holes in a slice of Swiss result from carbon dioxide bubbles produced by the propionic bacteria included among the cultures.

This recipe makes a small wheel, about one pound when complete. Double everything for a larger, two-pound wheel.

Ingredients

1 gallon whole cow’s milk
1/4 tsp. Thermophilic C culture, dissolved in 2 Tbsp. water
¼ tsp. Propionic Bacteria, dissolved in 2 Tbsp. water
1/2 tsp. Calcium Chloride solution in 2 Tbsp. water
1/4 tsp. liquid rennet in 2 Tbsp. water.
Brine
 240 grams (8 ounces) kosher salt
 1 liter (1 quart) cool drinking water
 ½ tsp. calcium chloride solution

Equipment

Kettle with water bath
Perforated Ladle
Measuring spoons
Curd cutting knife
4 custard cups or ramekins
Stainless steel whisk
Cheese press with basket
Cheesecloth
Glass, plastic, or stainless steel bowl for brine
2 thermometers

1. Warm milk to 90 deg. F.
2. Add the calcium chloride, stir.
3. Add Thermo C culture, stirring gently. Add Propionic bacteria and stir. Cover the pot and hold at 90 deg. F for 45 minutes.
4. Add the rennet. Stir gently for one minute. Cover and let set for 45 minutes at 90 deg. F.
5. When curd shows a clean break, cut into 1/4" cubes.
6. Maintaining 90 deg. F, cut the curds into rice-size pieces by stirring with a stainless steel whisk for 15 minutes.
7. Heat the curds to 120 deg. F at a rate of one degree per minute. This will take 30 minutes all together. Stir gently with the ladle while heating to keep curds from matting. Cover and hold at 120 deg. F for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally.
8. Let the curds settle for 5 minutes and pour off excess whey.
9. Moisten a piece of cheesecloth large enough to double-line your press basket. Wring it out and double-line the basket.
10. Ladle the curd into the basket. Fold netting in on top and press at light pressure (about 10 lbs.) for 15 minutes.
11. Remove the cheese from the press, unwrap, rewrap, and place upside-down back in the basket.
12. Press lightly again for 30 minutes.
13. Repeat rewrapping and pressing for 2 hours.
14. Rewrap and press lightly for 10-12 hours.
15. Make a saturated brine large enough to hold your cheese (one quart recipe is above. Multiply all ingredients as needed for your cheese).
16. Unwrap the cheese and float it in the brine for 1 hour at room temperature. Turn over once or twice during the hour of brining.
17. Remove the cheese from the brine and pat dry with paper towels or clean cheesecloth.
18. Place on aging mat. Age at 55 deg. F. and 85% humidity for one week. Turn once per day, wiping with brine solution and patting dry with clean cheesecloth or paper towels.
19. After one week, lower humidity to 80%, keep temperature at 55 deg. F, and continue to turn and wipe daily for two more weeks.
20. If mold spots appear, scrub them off with a vegetable brush dipped in white vinegar and salt.
21. At the end of two more weeks, move the cheese to room temperature storage (65-70 deg. F), maintaining 80% humidity. Wipe and turn every other day for two weeks. During this period, the rind should firm up and the propionic bacteria will produce small carbon dioxide "eyes." The cheese may bulge slightly from the production of the "eyes"—this is normal! (Continue to scrub with vinegar and salt if mold develops.)
22. At the end of room temperature aging, you may eat the cheese. To save it, wrap in cheese paper and refrigerate.

