



Valençay

White Mold Ripened Goat Cheese

This cheese is a decadent French-style soft goat cheese that comes with its own mythology explaining its unique pyramidal shape. According to the legend, this Loire Valley cheese used to be made as a pointed pyramid. However, after Napoleon's military failures in Egypt, he returned to France and became infuriated upon the sight of this pyramid shaped cheese. It reminded him of the Egyptian temples. With his sword he lopped off the top of the cheese before him and Valençay has ever since been made as a pyramid with a flattened top to appease Napoleon's temper.

Making Valençay is both simple and tricky. If you have made Fresh Chevre, you will find that the preparation of the curd is almost the same in simplicity. The key is the aging process, which will take 3 to 4 weeks under controlled temperature and humidity conditions. The result is an extraordinarily complex and delicious mixture of goaty tanginess and soft brie like texture and flavor with a salty, ashed rind that gives a little bite to the palate!

Keeps up to four weeks. Yields 3-4 cakes.

Ingredients:

3 qts. Of Trader Joe's Summerhill Goat Milk or Redwood Hill Goat Milk or Fresh Goat Milk
Either 1 pint of half and half OR 1 cup heavy cream
1/8 tsp. MA4001 culture
1/16 tsp. Penicillium Candidum
1/32 tsp. Geotrichum Candidum
1/4 tsp. liquid Calcium Chloride stirred into 1 Tablespoon of water
1/4 tsp. liquid Rennet stirred into 1 Tablespoon of water
Kosher salt
Edible Ash

Equipment:

Stainless Steel Pot, 4 qts. or larger
Dial Top Thermometer
Perforated ladle or slotted spoon
3 or 4 Pyramid shaped perforated molds
Ripening box with inset for draining
Hygrometer (to measure humidity)
Cheese Paper

Method

1. Add the milk and cream to the pot and bring to 86°F.
2. Remove from the heat to stir in the cultures. Sprinkle the MA4001 culture and both the Candidum powders over the milk surface and let dissolve for 2-4 minutes before stirring. Mix into the milk with 20 top/bottom strokes. Wait 3 minutes.

3. Add calcium chloride water. Stir.
4. Add rennet water, stir and cover. Let stand at room temperature (72°F.) for 12-18 hours (waiting longer results in a firmer curd).
5. Ladle the creamy curd (which looks like yogurt) into molds on a draining rack. Drain 12 hours at room temperature (72°F.). Remove whey from the drain pan as it collects over the next 12-24 hours.
6. When the curds have shrunk to 1/3 to 1/2 of their original size, sprinkle salt on the exposed surface of each cheese in its mold. Unmold and place the cheeses on the draining rack where you can sprinkle salt on all the other surfaces. Dry cheeses for about 12 hours.*
7. Using a salt shaker filled with edible ash, carefully sprinkle ash over the cheeses in order to cover all surfaces. At this point, your cheeses should look completely black with a thin layer of ash that cover the cheeses well but have no clumps. Drain for 12 more hours.
8. Once the surface of the cheeses are no longer glossy with moisture, they can be placed into the climate controlled ripening cave (refrigerator). Good ripening results can be obtained with a temperature of around 45°F. and a humidity of 85-95%. Careful: Humidity above 95% can cause the skin to pull away and low humidity will inhibit the blooming mold.
9. The white mold of the penicillium candidum will bloom around the ash coating and turn the cheeses white. Be sure to move the cheeses a little every day or every other day to prevent them from sticking on the bottom. After 1-2 weeks, this fluffy white mold turns into a pasty rind. At this point you can wrap them in cheese paper.
10. Allow the cheeses to ripen in your regular refrigerator for another week or two. Enjoy.

** An alternate method of applying salt and edible ash is to mix in a salt shaker, one Tablespoon of Kosher salt and one teaspoon of edible ash. Mix well. Then apply as in #6 and let drain for 24 hours.*