

QUICK & SIMPLE GOAT CHEESE

3 litres goat's milk

1 junket tablet (rennet) dissolved in 1 tablespoon of cool water

Salt to taste

Optional: heat the milk to 55C and hold for 30 seconds. Cool quickly (fill the sink with cold water) to 35C and continue as below. This acts as a mild pasteurization without killing everything and results in a longer-keeping cheese that can be repeated and not so subject to free bacteria that can give a good cheese today and a less than good another.

Warm the milk to 35C. Dissolve the junket tablet in the cool water and stir into the milk. Continue to stir for 20 seconds to be sure the rennet is evenly distributed.

Let the milk rest until the surface has gelled, usually about 30 minutes. You can check for gelling by gently touching the surface. If it is bouncy and springs back it is ready.

Cut the curd into 2cm pieces with the long knife, cutting horizontally, vertically and diagonally across the depth of the curd. Rest the curd for 10 more minutes.

Now, stir the curds gently for a minute or two to encourage the whey to separate from the curd. Gently spoon the curds into a cheese cloth (Chux cloth) lined colander or mould. After each 2 or 3 ladlesful, sprinkle a half teaspoon of salt (or to taste) over the curd.

If using a cloth, take up the four corners and secure with a rubber band. Suspend over a bucket or the sink and allow to drip overnight.

If using a mould, fill the curds to the top. Let it drain for a few minutes and top up the mould (not too quickly or it will ooze out the holes). Let it sit full for half an hour and invert the whole mould. Wait another half hour and invert again. Repeat this 3 or 4 times and it's ready. The advantage of using a mould is that the whey drains from the top as well as the bottom and you won't end up with a firm top and a soggy middle.

If the cheese has to sit around for a few days, sprinkle more salt over all surfaces as a preservative. The salt draws out further whey and it's the whey which helps the goaty flavours develop.

To keep even longer, put the cheese in a brine, 1 heaped tablespoon salt to half a litre of cool boiled water.

This is the basic cheese. What you do to it from here will give you different results. You may wish to cook it after cutting the curds; this heating draws out more whey and the cheese is firmer. You may wish to press it also. Or you may wish to stir herbs and flavours into the soft cheese when you unwrap it from the cheese-cloth. Experiment with your cheese!