The ABCs of Cheesemaking

The art of the master cheesemaker

Cheese is a simple, natural product that is obtained when the enzymes in milk cause it to curdle.

Cheesemakers have developed the know-how to precisely control this living and sometimes unpredictable process. They may also add spices as the cheese is forming or smoke wheels of cheese.

Experience, initiative, and passion are the tools of the trade!

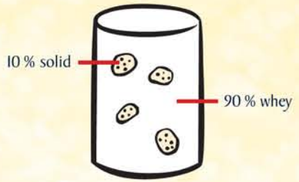
It all starts with milk

Types of milk / Types of processing

At a glance

Cheese is produced when the casein in milk coagulates to form curds. Draining separates the whey from the curds, which ripen under controlled conditions and develop a particular texture and flavor.

Coagulation

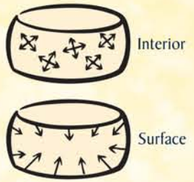


To coagulate milk, the cheesemaker controls the activity of the naturally occurring enzymes it contains or adds enzymes with rennet. The resulting jelly contains 10% solids–primarily fat, protein, and the other substances that form the bulk of cheese. Whey is mainly water.

Draining

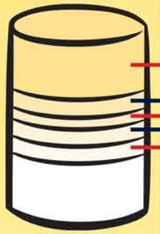
Depending on the type of cheese desired, cheesemakers eliminate a certain amount of the whey. Free draining produces creamy and soft cheeses. Assisted draining involves techniques like cutting, stirring, cooking, souring, pressing, and salting to produce firmer cheeses.

Ripening



During ripening, cheesemakers develop the flavors, aromas, and textures of cheese by controlling the activity of enzymes from yeasts, molds, and bacteria. In interior ripening, the enzymes work throughout the cheese. In surface ripening, they move from the surface toward the center.

Cheese type is determined by the ripening process.



Less than 35% = hard cheese

35% to 45% = firm cheese

45% to 50% = semi-soft cheese

50% to 60% = soft cheese

Over 60% = fresh cheese

Interior, e.g., Parmesan

Unripened, e.g., Brins de Gouda

Interior, e.g., Cheddar

Washed rind, e.g., Fin Renard

Unripened, e.g., Mozzarella

Interior, e.g., Port-Salut

Washed rind, e.g., Migneron

Blue veined, e.g., Ciel de Charlevoix

Bloomy rind, e.g., Camembert

Washed rind, e.g., Sir Wilfrid Laurier

Blue veined, e.g., Bleubry

Salted, e.g., Feta

Unripened, e.g., Bûche de chèvre