Cheese Science Toolkit
cheesescience.org

THE 10 STEPS OF CHEESEMAKING

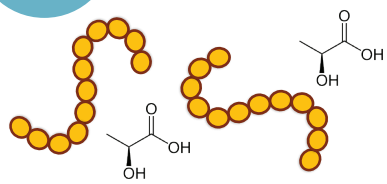
1 Milk →

Heat

Composition

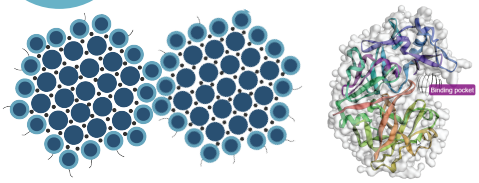
Cheesemakers have a lot of decisions when it comes to selecting the milk for cheesemaking—animal species, breed, time of year, etc. Milk can be also be heat treated (pasteurization), have fat added/removed (standardization), etc.

2 Acid →



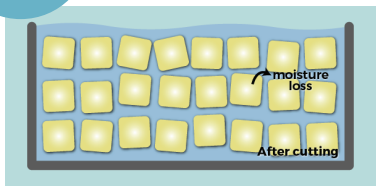
The two main methods to acidify milk is through culturing or direct acidification. Culturing refers of starter culture bacteria, which ferment lactose into lactic acid. A cheesemaker can also choose to add acid directly via vinegar, lactic acid, etc.

3 Coagulation



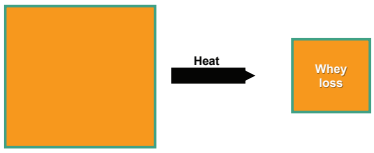
Coagulation is the step in the cheesemaking process that results in solid (or semi-solid) curd from the liquid milk (aka curdling). This process can be accomplished via: (1) Acid, (2)Enzymes (rennet), and/or (3) Heat. Often a combination of these.

4 Cutting →



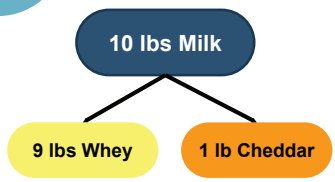
Cutting is the first of many steps with the goal of removing moisture from the curd. After all, cheesemaking is really just the controlled dehydration of milk. Cutting increases the surface area drastically, encouraging whey loss.

5 Cooking →



In this case, "cooking" the curd means applying mild heat (90-120°F depending on cheese variety) and stirring the curds to encourage even heat distribution. Applying heat to the curd particles removes whey, continuing the trend of water loss.

6 Draining →



The curds have been swimming in whey for the last several steps of the cheese-making process. Now comes the time to remove the whey by draining it away. Rarely is whey allowed to go down the drain; it's usually processed further.

7 Salting →

The exact time and amount of salt added to cheese during the cheese-making process is highly specific to the type being produced. Sometimes it is added to the curd, the cheese is soaked in brine, or is dry-rub salted.

8 Forming →

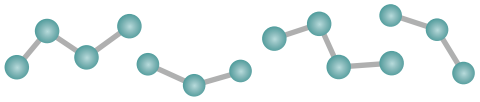
Curds can be formed into the final shape of the desired cheese through a variety of methods. A variety of forms or "hoops" exist for cheese to take its final shape. Such as, large block forms, small round forms, or anywhere in between.

9 Pressing

Some cheeses are pressed after their curds have been placed into a form or hoop. The pressing encourages curds to "knit" together forming a solid piece of cheese while simultaneously encouraging further whey to be drained. Some aren't pressed.

10 Age and Beyond...

Days → Years



The final step in the cheesemaking process is to age the cheese. The length of time a cheese needs to age depends greatly on the variety in question. Some cheeses are ready to consume almost immediately after they are made (fresh cheeses), whereas some require weeks/months/years in order to attain the proper flavor and texture profile that the cheesemaker is targeting.