

Neufchatel Cheese

1 gallon milk
1/4 cup culture buttermilk (fresh)
1/4 Junket Rennet tablet

This is a soft, spreadable cheese originated in France and is eaten fresh. Sometimes called "farmer's" cheese, think of it as a low fat cream cheese which can be eaten on crackers straight or mixed with seasonings, used in cheese cake, folded into omelets, etc. Great for making dips too!

EQUIPMENT

1. 5 quart stainless steel pot with lid, sterilized by boiling a small amount of water for 5 minutes covered
2. whisk, used to mix ingredients. Try not to create foam.
3. thermometer, should read in the range of 32-220 F (0-110 C)
4. quart strainer
5. sterile handkerchief, sterilized by boiling and hanging to dry
6. receiving container, to catch draining whey. A one gallon bowl or clean plastic bucket will do.

PROCEDURE

1. Pour milk into the pre-sterilized 5 quart stainless steel pot. Warm to 65 F with stirring.
2. Meanwhile, dissolve 1/4 tablet rennet in 1/4 cup water.
3. When the milk reaches 65 F, remove from heat, add buttermilk, whisk to mix thoroughly.
4. Stir the dissolved rennet into the 65 F inoculated milk, blend thoroughly.
5. Cover and let sit overnight undisturbed at room temperature (65-70F, 20C).
6. The next morning, a clean break should have formed (see recipe for basic cheese for the test). If the coagulated milk is not firm enough, let it sit until it does, as long as another 12 hours.
7. When a clean break is achieved, cut the curd into 1/2 inch cubes (see recipe for basic cheese for technique). Some recipes call for stirring the soft curd with a whisk. This will work, but will make the separation of curds and whey more difficult.
8. Ladle the curds and whey into a clean sterile handkerchief supported in a large strainer, placed over a one gallon bowl. Allow the whey to drain through. If the cloth becomes clogged, lift the cloth back and forth or scrape the curd away from the cloth. Save the whey for ricotta if you wish (see recipe).
9. When most of the whey has drained through, pick up the four corners of the cloth and suspend the curd in a cool place to drain overnight (from a shelf of the refrigerator if you have room).
10. The next day, remove the cheese and mix in 1- 3 teaspoons of salt, according to taste. It may be eaten immediately. Store covered in the refrigerator until use.
11. You may pack the cheese into a mold of your choice (a squat tin can with the ends removed for instance).