

Monterey Jack Cheese

Monterey Jack is a popular semi-hard cheese that was first developed in the American west. It is mild and flavorful, and melts easily. It is traditionally made with cow milk, but goat milk will work equally well.

Ingredients

- 2 gallons cow or goat milk (do not use UHT/UP milk)
 - Mesophilic culture (choose one):
 - 1 packet direct-set mesophilic culture
 - 1/8 teaspoon bulk mesophilic culture
 - Rennet (choose one):
 - 1/2 teaspoon liquid animal rennet, dissolved in 1/2 cup cool water
 - 1/4 teaspoon double-strength liquid vegetable rennet, dissolved in 1/2 cup cool water
 - 1/4 tablet vegetable rennet, dissolved in 1/2 cup cool water
 - 1 tablespoons sea salt

Equipment

- Large pot
- Thermometer
- Long knife (curd knife; does not need to be sharp)
 - Cheesecloth
 - Cheese press
 - Cheese wax

Instructions

1. Heat the milk to 90°F. Add culture, stir well using an up-and-down motion, cover, and allow to ferment for 30 to 45 minutes.
2. Stir to homogenize the milk, and slowly fold in the diluted rennet using an up-and-down motion.
3. Allow the cheese to set for 45 minutes, or until the whey begins to separate from the curd. You should see a layer of mostly clear whey floating on top of the curd, and the curd should

- be pulling away from the sides of the pot.
4. Using a curd knife, carefully cut the curds into 1/4-inch cubes and allow to set for 45 minutes. Do not stir.
 5. Over the next 30 minutes, slowly heat the curds to 100°F, stirring frequently. As you stir, the curds will shrink.
 6. Once the curds are at 100°F, maintain the temperature and continue stirring occasionally for the next 30 minutes. If the curds get too hot, remove from heat. After 30 minutes, let the curds rest for 5 minutes.
 7. Pour about half of the whey out, leaving enough to just cover the top of the curds. Maintain the curds at 100°F for the next 30 minutes, stirring every few minutes to prevent them sticking together.
 8. Pour the curds into a cheesecloth-lined colander. Place the colander and curds into the sink, and add sea salt. Stir carefully and allow to drain.
 9. Line a cheese mold with cheesecloth. Press at 5 pounds of pressure for 15 minutes.
 10. Using a fresh piece of cheesecloth, flip the cheese and press at 10 pounds of pressure for 12 hours.
 11. Remove the cheese from the press and air-dry for 2 to 3 days, until smooth and dry to the touch.
 12. Wax the cheese and age at 55° to 60°F for at least 30 days. If using raw milk, age for at least 60 days. The flavor of this cheese will become stronger and sharper with longer aging