

Paneer Cheese

- 1/2 gallon fresh milk
- 1/3 cup fresh lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon white sugar

A note about milk: Making cheese requires that there be active bacteria in the milk. The more active bacteria, the easier it is to get a clean break and make cheese. I prefer to work with raw milk, because there are more good bacteria. However, raw milk is not always an option -- it must be legal for you to purchase in your state, and you must have a dairy nearby which sells it. It is impossible to make cheese with ultra-pasteurized milk (milk which has but been pasteurized at high temperatures). Unfortunately, dairies are not required to label whether the temperature at which their milk is pasteurized, and most high production dairies use different temperatures to pasteurize milk going out in different deliveries or to different markets (so that a commercial milk that worked one week, may not work the next). My advice is get to know the people at your local dairy farm -- they can guarantee you FDA-legal milk that has been pasteurized to 145-180 degrees, but which is not heated substantially more.

Make sure that everything is clean and sterile.

In a heavy-bottomed pan, warm the milk over a medium to medium-high heat, stirring occasionally until it just starts to boil (about 10 minutes).

Lower heat to "low" and slowly stir in the lemon juice and 1/3 cup water. If whey is not almost clear, add more lemon juice and keep stirring.

Remove from heat and keep stirring 2 to 3 minutes.

Let stand for 10 minutes.

Place cloth in a colander. A layer of cheesecloth over a layer of thin non-terry towel works well.

Strain the water and whey from the curds by pouring the whole pot through the cheesecloth-lined colander.

Rinse all the lemon juice out of the cheese, and cool the cheese, by flushing cold water through the curds and turning/sifting the curds as you do.

Lift cloth out and squeeze the water out.

Mix the salt and sugar into the curds in the cloth.

Either twist and tie the cloth and hang over a basin for about 20 minutes, or twist and tie the cloth and leave in the colander with a weight over for about 20 minutes.

Either cook with it immediately, or refrigerate overnight.

Serves: makes about half a pound of cheese

Preparation time: 60 minutes

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