

The milk must be sweet and pure. If the fresh morning's milk is mixed with the previous day's milk it is usually in about the right condition for making cheese in regard to the acidity. With the acidimeter it should show .18 to .19 per cent. acid or by the rennet test 20 to 24 seconds.

A large tin or new tub, in fact any clean vessel which will hold milk and not injure it, will answer as a cheese vat.

Heat the milk to 86° F. by setting it on the stove and stirring or by placing a clean can of hot water in it, and keep it as nearly at that temperature as possible. If the cheese is to be colored, use one small teaspoonful of cheese color to 100 lbs. of milk (10 gallons). Add the color to a pint of the milk and stir well into the milk in the vat.

For every 25 lbs. of milk use one teaspoonful of rennet. Try to get the rennet at some cheese factory; junket or rennet tablets, such as druggists sell, are often not satisfactory. Dilute the rennet in a cup or more of cold water and pour it in a stream up and down the milk, stirring well all the time, and continue stirring two or three minutes. Cover the vat to keep the milk warm. Try the milk occasionally to see when it has sufficiently coagulated, by inserting the index finger into the curd and with the thumb making a dent or slight cut in the curd just at the base of the finger, then slowly moving the finger forward; if the curd breaks clean like a firm but tender custard it is ready to cut. The time from setting or adding the rennet to cutting is usually about twenty minutes. The older or riper the milk the more quickly the rennet will act upon it. Over-ripe milk will give a dry, acidy cheese.

If one expected to make much cheese I would advise getting a set of curd knives. While more tedious, a long bladed carving knife, or thin bladed sword answers the purpose. First cut lengthwise into strips, one-third of an inch wide, then crosswise the same, as well as one can horizontally. Begin stirring gently and continue the cutting if the carving knife is used till the curd is of uniform size. At the same time heat may be slowly applied. The vat may be set in a vessel holding warm water, or a clean can filled with hot water may be put into the vat. One-half hour should be taken to get the curd heated to 98 degrees. After it is brought to that temperature it is not necessary to stir continuously, but it must be frequently stirred to prevent the curd from matting, and the temperature must be maintained. The curd is usually ready to dip three and one-half hours from the time the rennet is added to the milk. The right condition for the curd to be in at this stage is ascertained by feeling the curd. If it is rather firm, has a shiny appearance, and falls apart when pressed in the hand, it is ready to have the whey drawn.

By the acidimeter it should show from .19 to .2 per cent. of acid, or when a little of the curd is squeezed well in the hand and pressed against a hot iron (a stove poker answers the purpose) and when gently withdrawn leaves fine hair-like threads one-quarter of an inch long on the iron, it is a sign the whey should be removed.