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ON THE MAKING OF CHESHIRE CHEESE.

(Continued from our last)

It has been generally considered that a gallon of milk (supposing little or no cream has been taken from it) will produce, upon an average of the season, 1lb. of saleable cheese; that is when the cheese is four or five months old. In autumn there is always more curd from the same quantity of milk than at any other part of the season.

During wet weather there will sometimes be more milk than usual, though not a proportionately greater quantity of curd. An experienced dairymaid soon detects these different results, and makes allowances accordingly. I have met with no dairymaid who regularly weighs the salt; but a highly-respectable farmer, whose wife makes a first-rate cheese, has given me the weight used in his dairy, as near as the same can be computed. It is as follows:—

	lbs.	oz.	to salt is used.
In March and April their cheeses average about	30	and about 0	10
In May, June, and July	20	" 2	10
In August	20	" 1	12
In September	20	" 1	4
In October & November	20	" 0	10

In the above instance it will be seen that more in proportion was used in summer than at other times, and that the average is 1 lb. of salt for 47lbs. of dried cheese (or say forty gallons of milk).

I was favoured with an account from another dairy in which, to oblige me, the salt for *once* was weighed. For a cheese which weighed 46 lbs. at four months old) 1 lb. 1 oz. was used. This is also after the rate of 1 lb. of salt for 40 lbs. of dried cheese, and was said to be the quantity uniformly used throughout the year in this dairy, which consisted of about forty cows.

A third account is from a dairy of sixteen cows: the quantity of salt used was generally about 1lb. for 45 lbs. of cheese, but the dairymaid made a trial last year with one cheese, using only three quarters of a pound. The cheese was made at the beginning of June, and when weighed in the middle of September was 42lbs. This cheese was admitted to be better than the others in the same dairy.*

The salt termed the "middle grain" is the kind generally used; but some use "fine." Before applying it, the curd is cut into three or four equal-sized pieces, and each of these is broken into smaller pieces by hand, or is passed once through the curd-mill. The salt is then scatt'ed over it, and the "breaking" continued either by the hands, the curd-mill, or both, until the salt is well intermixed and the curd is perfectly crumbled. Each portion as it is broken is put into the cheese vat, in which has first been placed a clean and rather finer cloth than was used for the previous process, and the curd is compacted as much with the hands as possible. To admit of the curd being properly pressed it is necessary to put it into such a vat as it will *overflow* by at least two inches. It is also rounded up a little in the middle. The cloth is then brought over it, and tucked in at the edges of the vat with a small wooden

* It may not be out of place here to state that at Northwich, which is about the centre of the county, and where the principal salt-works are found, salt is at present bought at 8d. per bushel of 56lbs. In large quantities the price is considerably lower.

† The curd-mill is of recent introduction, and it is only in a few dairies that it is met with; some dairymaids highly approving, others objecting to it. I think it will be soon more generally adopted, as it effects a saving in time and breaks the curd more regularly than it can be done by hand.

knife or other dull edged instrument. In order to support the outside of that part of the curd which is above the vat, and to keep it in proper form when the press is applied, a tin or zinc hoop or "fillet," the edges of which are rounded off so as not to cut the cloth, and the ends lapping over and unattached so that the same fillet will do for different sizes of cheese, is introduced round the inside of the top of the vat. The "fillet" thus placed sinks with the curd, and having small perforations in it, the emission of the whey is effected through it as through the perforations of the vat. Since it has become the fashion to make Cheshire cheeses *thicker* than they used to be, it is no unusual thing to see fillets 6 or 8 inches broad.

The vat is now again placed under the screw or lever press, and the skewering is also continued. The pressure is increased at intervals, and the skewers inserted in fresh places to accelerate as much as possible the discharge of the remaining whey or "thrustings," as it is now termed.

In the course of an hour from the time of salting, the curd is taken from under the screw or lever press and out of the vat, for the purpose of being turned upside down, which is done on a table. In the first place, the angles of that side which was topmost in the vat are cut off, a circular piece, two or three inches deep, is often also scooped out of the centre, and both are broken small with the hands and rounded up in the middle. The cloth being drawn over the curd, the vat is then turned down upon it, and re-turning the vat with the curd in it, the other angles and centre part of the curd, are broken in a similar manner; after which the tin fillet is put on, and the screwing and pressing are continued as before for about half an hour or an hour. It will, probably, be two or three o'clock in the afternoon before the curd (or cheese, as it may now be termed) is *got under the press*, that is, when it is removed from the screw to the stone press; but where the lever press is used instead of the screw, which, I think, might always be advantageously done, all the change that will now be required is a little more weight at the end of the lever.

Before turning the cheese for the purpose of placing it under the press, it is usual to prick it perpendicularly down with a skewer in several places, for the purpose of making drains for the whey, after having been so turned. A clean cloth is applied, and where the lever press is not used, the cheese is put under one of the lightest of the other kind. A pressure of six, eight, or ten cwt., according to the size of the cheese, will be sufficient. This is generally accomplished by about two or three o'clock in the afternoon. Smaller skewers are now used, and remain (by removing them occasionally into fresh places) until about four o'clock; they are then withdrawn, but the cheese remains half an hour longer undisturbed, to allow the whey to drain from it. It is then or some time in the evening, turned, a clean cloth is put over it, and the pressing continued. If the lever press be used, the weight may be a little increased.

On the *second day* the cheese is generally turned twice or three times; it is also skewered, and clean cloths are used each time of turning. I would observe here, that if any of the clothes are used again before they have been washed and dried in the open air, great care should be taken that they be well scalded. The press used for at least the first two days,

and, if possible, during the whole process, should be situate in the dairy, kitchen, or some other moderately warm place, otherwise the whey will be longer in discharging, and more liable on that account, from the acidity which it soon acquires, to injure the flavour of the cheese. Another advantage of the lever press is, that in cold weather it may be easily moved to a sufficiently warm place, which cannot be the case with the common presses. Those common presses are chiefly made of one square block of stone, fixed in a wooden frame, but are also made of wooden boxes filled with slag or other heavy material. They are generally fixed to the walls of the dairy, for the purpose of being staid to them, and being there most out of the way; when there is not room for them in the dairy or kitchen, they are placed in the salting room or pantry, which latter places are often much too cold for the purpose, as the whey seldom gets thoroughly extracted when the presses are in cold situations.

On the *third day* the cheese is again turned once or twice, but ought not to require any skewering. The heaviest press is now had recourse to, and for a cheese of sixty or seventy pounds weight about thirty cwt. will be pressure sufficient; but some dairy maids apply as much as two tons, their heaviest press being that weight. A cheese press of this weight, made of a block of red freestone, would be three feet and two inches long, 2 feet 8 inches wide, and 3 ft. 2 in. high.

On the *fourth day*, it is usual in most dairies to discontinue the pressing, but in others it is continued for a day or two longer.

The cheese is then removed to what is called

The Salting and Drying Room.—Sometimes these are distinct apartments, but more generally one room suffices for both purposes. The salt can now, of course, be only applied externally; and the good, if any, effected, is to harden the coat of the cheese. The cheese I have before alluded to, as having been made with three-quarters of a lb. of salt, and which was much above an average in quality, was removed, as an experiment, *direct from the press to the cheese room*. I am inclined to think this the better system, or at least that a great deal of the present labour of the salting-room might be dispensed with.

It is, however, only right to state that in most dairies of this county the practice of *external salting* still continues. I will therefore describe the process usually adopted.

The cheese is taken out of the vat, and a strong bandage, called a "fillet," about two inches broad, and long enough to go three times round the cheese, is used. As this bandage is put on, salt is applied underneath it, to the coat of the cheese. The bandage is fastened with strong pins, the cheese placed on stone or wooden shelves or benches, and salt spread on the top to within an inch or two of the edges. The cheese is turned daily, and fresh salt and a clean bandage applied. In some few dairies, it is the practice, before the salting above described to half immerse the cheese for two or three days in strong brine, kept in a shallow tub for that purpose. The salting process, above described, is continued for various periods, by some for five or six days, by others as long as three weeks. I will give the rule followed by the farmer who furnished me with the particu-

lars of his salting of the curd. It is as follows:—

From the beginning of the season (about March) to the time of the cow being turned out to grass (12th May), the cheese remains in salt four days; from thence to the end of July, ten days; in August eight days; September six days; and the rest of the season, 4 days.

It is obvious, from the practice in this dairy, that it is considered necessary for the cheese to remain in salt longer in the middle of summer than at other seasons.

After this salting the cheese is well wiped or washed, has a clean bandage put round it, and continues in the same room, or an adjoining one, on wooden shelves for the purpose of being *dried*. It is turned once a day, and remains until it is considered sufficiently dry for being removed to the *cheese-room*. The length of time for keeping cheese in the "drying room" varies from seven to twenty days, and is regulated by the temperature of the weather, or the *cheese-room*, to which it has to be next removed. In hot weather, and especially if the cheese be exposed to the heat of the noon-day sun, the change from a *too cold drying house* (as many often are, except, in the middle of summer) to a *too hot cheese-room*, is calculated to cause cracks in the cheese, which said cracks have from time to time to be filled up by the application of bacon fat or whey butter otherwise mites would soon be generated, and the appearance of the cheese detracted from. To prevent this cracking as much as possible, the salting and drying houses have rarely, if ever, the windows opened, and drafts or currents of air are thereby prevented. This precaution is also adopted in the *cheese-room*; and, in addition, the light is excluded either by a shutter or *blind*, as I have before stated.

The cheese I have before alluded to, as having been made without any *external salting*, as an experiment, and which was taken *direct from the cheese-press to the cheese-room*, was made in the beginning of June, and in the end of September was ready for the market.—The quality of the cheese was better than that made in the ordinary way, and all the labour of the salting and drying house was saved. My own impression is, as I have already hinted, that the drying-rooms are often *too cold*; and that if it be found to be desirable, as perhaps it may be in some dairies, to continue the use of such drying-rooms, the heat should be kept as near as possible at from 50 deg. to 55 deg. In concluding my remarks on this room, I must not omit to observe that it is necessary the cheeses should remain *bandaged*, in order to prevent their bulging, and also that they should be turned over once a day. If one cheese be made daily, one will consequently—in the course of a certain time after the season of cheese-making commences—have to be removed every day to the cheese-room. When taken to this room, the situation of which I have before described, it is usual to scrape and clean the coat of the cheese, and to place it, in the first instance, in the coolest part of the room often for a few weeks upon shelves or benches, which are cooler than the floor, subsequently on the coolest part of the floor, and ultimately upon the warmest part. It is usual to continue the bandage or "fillet" for several weeks after the cheese gets into this room, and, indeed, in some dairies until it is sold. It is also usual to turn the cheeses, and