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IN AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS

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U. of N. Agr. College & U. S. Dept. of Agr. Cooperating
W. H. Brokaw, Director, Lincoln

MAKING SOFT CHEESES IN THE HOME

Soft Cheeses

The life of soft cheeses is so short that it is necessary to make them often. Because of being so perishable, they must be kept cool. The method of making cottage, Neufchatel and cream cheese and the modifications are simple, and the equipment needed for making them in small quantities is not elaborate; therefore, an excellent opportunity is offered to produce at low cost a fresh, wholesome and attractive food for home use. The soft cheeses are coming more and more into common use. In addition to their rich flavor and high nutritive value, they may be used with other foods to form many appetizing dishes. The two types of soft cream cheese that may be made in the home with a small amount of equipment are cottage and Neufchatel.

Cottage Cheese

The first step in making this type of cheese is to sour or ripen the milk. If care has been used in the production and handling of milk, a good grade of cheese may be made by allowing the milk to sour naturally. Some of the disadvantages of natural souring are:

1. Slow coagulation or curdling.
2. Gassy and undesirable fermentations if milk is not clean causing loss of curd in whey.
3. Bitter and other undesirable flavors.
4. Lack of uniformity in the cheese.

To sour the milk naturally, pour in a pan and allow to remain in a clean, warm place at a temperature of 75 degrees F. In about thirty hours the milk will clabber and should have a clean, sour and pleasant flavor. When firmly clabbered it should be cut into pieces one inch square and then stirred thoroughly. The curd is now ready to be heated which helps the curd to expel the whey and aids in giving the cheese a firm texture. The curd is raised to a temperature of 100 degrees F. and held at this temperature for 30 minutes. It is best to place the pan of broken curd in a vessel of hot water so as to control the temperature. The curd should be stirred frequently.

At the conclusion of the heating, pour the curd and whey into a small cheesecloth bag and move about freely so as to drain. The draining is stopped when the whey ceases to flow in a steady stream.

The curd is then emptied from the bag and worked with a spoon until it becomes fine in grain. The addition of sour or sweet cream makes the texture smoother, improves the flavor, and makes the cheese more palatable. Salt is then added according to taste.

Neufchatel Cheese

This cheese is made from whole milk. When cheese is made from milk to which cream is added, so as to increase the fat content, it is called cream cheese. Neufchatel or cream cheese requires about the same equipment as cottage cheese. The quality of milk is very important. Milk which is sour or has undergone any abnormal

22087mh - 8/40

fermentation should not be used. Using fresh, unripened milk, without any change in acidity, makes it possible to control the normal fermentations which are necessary for cheese of high quality.

Scald milk for three-fourths hour. Cool to 75 degrees. Add three-fourths cup of good flavored sour milk and mix it thoroughly into the milk. Then add rennet solution. One-eighth junket tablet is dissolved in four tablespoonfuls of cold water and this solution added to the milk. Hold the milk at 78 degrees F. to coagulate. In about 15 to 18 hours, about one-half inch of whey collects upon the surface of the curd. After the setting period, pour the curd upon a drain cloth and leave undisturbed for 3 to 4 hours or even longer, after which it should be worked toward the center of the cloth in order to hasten the draining. When cooled, the bag of curd is placed between two boards and a weight of about 10 to 20 pounds placed on top. This is left overnight. Frequent rearrangement of the bag will hasten the process.

After having been properly pressed, the curd is salted and then mixed. About 2 teaspoons salt are used for the curd from one gallon of milk. The curd is placed in a crock or porcelain dish and held at a temperature near 50 degrees F. Under favorable conditions it will keep in good condition for several days. It is most palatable immediately after it is made.

Variations - Finely chopped pinientos, olives, or nuts may be mixed with Neufchatel cheese at the time of salting. This is very good for sandwiches and salads.

Processed Cottage Cheese

The cottage cheese curd prepared as above but pressed slightly drier than usual is used in this process. To this is added the following:

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup butter
Salt to taste (about $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp.)
1 Tb. soda

Mix the butter, salt and soda thoroughly into the cottage cheese. Let stand 2 hours. Add 1 cup sweet cream and put all into a double boiler and heat until a smooth consistency has been formed. Remove from the fire and add one-half cup of sweet or sour cream to which has been added cheese coloring if desired (about $\frac{1}{4}$ or $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoonful). Beat until smooth and turn into buttered dish to mold.

This complete process must be finished within one day. The cheese should age for about five days. It may be covered with paraffin wax if it is to be kept. This cheese is mild with very little flavor and for that reason needs an added flavor. Pimientos, caraway seed or a small amount of a strong flavored cheese may be added for additional flavor.

For further details see U.S.D.A. Bulletin Number 960.

(Adapted and revised from Extension Circular 924 by Dr. P. A. Downs, Dairy Department, and Miss Mabel Doremus, State Extension Agent, Foods and Nutrition.)