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30-Minute Mozzarella

The final step in your journey to achieving pizza guru status is making your own mozzarella cheese. In this recipe, our friend Chef Joe Renfroe illustrates how easy it is to make superb cheese! This is extremely rewarding to pull off and far more economical than purchasing mozzarella of this quality. That makes this recipe a must-try in our book!

Yields three balls about 5 ounces each.

Ingredients

- 1 gallon milk (raw milk is best, pasteurized is fine, but do not use ultra-pasteurized)
- 1-1/4 cups water, divided
- 1-1/2 teaspoons citric acid
- 1 tablespoon kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon liquid rennet

Developing the Curd

1. Add the citric acid to one cup of the water, stirring until the citric acid is completely dissolved.
2. In a separate measuring cup, combine the rennet and the remaining quarter cup of water, stirring well.
3. Pour the milk into a pot. Stir the milk aggressively, creating a small funnel in the center of the pot. While stirring, slowly add the citric acid mixture into the milk. Keep stirring for several minutes to fully incorporate the citric acid.

4. Heat the milk over medium heat until it reaches a temperature of 90° F.
5. Immediately remove the milk from the heat, add the rennet mixture, and stir for exactly twenty-five seconds.
6. Cover the milk and let it stand for five or ten minutes, until it develops into milk curd, with a custard-like consistency.

Separating the Whey

1. Leaving the curd in the pot, cut it into a crosshatch pattern roughly half of an inch square, cutting all the way to the bottom of the pot. This will release a milky white liquid called whey. Do not remove the whey from the pot!
2. Put the pot back on medium heat, occasionally stirring it gently, until the curd reaches 105°. Remove the pot from the heat and let it stand uncovered for five minutes.
3. Remove the curd from the pot, leaving behind the whey. Put the curd in a strainer and let it drain back into the pot for thirty seconds. Gently squeeze the curd to remove more moisture. Do not try to remove all the moisture! Set the strained curd aside.
4. Combine two quarts of the whey with one tablespoon kosher salt, stirring well.
5. Reheat this whey mixture to 170°, stirring occasionally, then add the curd to the warmed whey and remove the pot from the heat.

Forming the Cheese

1. Let the curd sit in the warmed whey for 1–2 minutes, then use your hands or a slotted spoon to gently stretch the curd, bunch it back up, and re-stretch it. Repeat this until the curd develops a shiny coating.
2. Pinch off pieces of curd about the size of pool balls and tuck it under itself to create a ball. Voilà! Mozzarella cheese!

3. Put the balls of cheese in a container, cover them with cool water, and then cover the container and put it in the refrigerator.
4. While it's best if used within the first several hours, the cheese can be stored in the refrigerator for up to a week.

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