



# HOW CHEESE IS MADE



## The Cheese Making Process

Cheese is older than Christianity. Legend goes that its discovery was a happy accident. Many centuries BC a nomad carrying milk across the desert in a saddle-bag made from an animal's stomach, reached his destination to discover that the milk had separated into liquid (whey) and solid (curd). Cheese was unwittingly born and the world's taste-buds rejoiced.

While Britain has no deserts, it does boast a rich history of cheese making. Traditionally cheese was made on the farm, but now 90% of cheese production takes place in modern creameries. However, the basic principles of the cheese making process remain the same.



## Cheese Making Made Simple

### STAGE ONE - *Aim: To produce curds from the protein found in milk*

- Milk is pasteurised and a bacteriological starter is added to 'sour' and thicken the milk.
- A renneting agent is added to the milk to form curds. Nowadays, most British cheese produced uses a non-animal renneting agent, making the cheese suitable for vegetarians.
- The curd is left to set.

### STAGE TWO - *Aim: To concentrate the curd*

- The curds are cut so that the whey is released (soft cheeses are cut lightly while hard cheeses are cut finely).
- The curds are either 'cooked' or are piled on top of each other (the process known as 'cheddaring'), and further cut to expel whey.
- The curd is milled and salt is added (in some recipes salt is included by immersing the moulded cheese in a bath of brine for several days).
- The curd is pressed into moulds.

### STAGE THREE - *Aim: To ripen the cheese*

The cheese is placed in storage rooms where temperature and humidity are controlled and varied according to the cheese being produced (Cheddar was originally stored in Somerset's Cheddar Gorge caves). Mild Cheddar is generally stored for around three months, whilst Mature Cheddar is stored for up to a year. Cheeses have very individual storage processes that create their distinctive flavours and textures. During the first week of Blue Stilton's storage, it is turned daily to ensure an even distribution of moisture throughout the cheese.

BRITISH  
CHEESE  
BOARD





# Different Methods for Different Cheeses

Slight tweaks in production methods result in different varieties of cheese. For example, by creating different levels of acidity in the vat, by heating the curds or by varying the time/temperature combinations during storage.

## FRESH CHEESES

- Lactic acid is used to form curds rather than rennet.
- The cheese is not cut, pressed or ripened (except for Feta).
- For Mozzarella the curd is immersed in hot water or whey then kneaded and stretched.

## SOFT-RIPENED CHEESES

- The curds are cut into large cubes to help retain the moisture.
- The rind is sprayed with a surface mould (e.g. *penicillium candidum*) to produce the distinctive soft, velvety bloom and ripen the cheese from the outside in.

## HARD AND SEMI-HARD CHEESES

- A high temperature is used to set the curd.
- The curd is cut very finely to release more whey.
- The ripening process takes anything from three months to two years to reach the correct flavour and texture.

## BLUE CHEESES

- The mould *penicillium roqueforti* is introduced to the milk.
- After about six weeks each cheese is pierced with stainless steel needles to let oxygen in. This encourages mould growth and permits other gases to escape.

## British Cheese - yes please!

The British Cheese Board aims to increase consumption of cheese made by its members and provides information about cheese as part of a balanced diet.

What are the benefits of eating cheese?

- Hard cheese contains essential nutrients - protein, calcium, phosphorus and vitamin B12
- It is versatile and convenient to use as part of any meal occasion
- There are more than 700 named cheeses now produced in the UK alone

The British Cheese Board was formed in 1997 and its members account for the majority of cheese made in the UK.



For further information on the British Cheese Board and its members and the cheeses they produce go to [www.britishcheese.com](http://www.britishcheese.com) or e-mail us at [enquiries@britishcheese.com](mailto:enquiries@britishcheese.com)

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