Farmers Cheese

1 gal. Milk
1 C plain yogurt (acidophilus), beaten smooth
¼ tablet of rennet, dissolved in ¼ C water, ~90ºF
2T salt

Mix milk and yogurt and heat to 95º-100ºF. Add dissolved rennet and stir well. Cover and let stand in a warm place for about an hour (or until the curd pulls away cleanly from the sides of the pan). Using a long knife, cut up the curd—at first vertically like a checkerboard, then diagonally. Use a large spoon to stir up well the curd. Cover and let stand for another half hour.

Place four layers of cheese cloth in a strainer. Carefully, pour the liquid through the cloth. (It’s a whole lot easier to get as much of the liquid out first before straining the curd.) Strain out the curd until its moisture content is like cottage cheese. Turn the curd into a bowl and add, a teaspoon at a time, salt to taste. After each teaspoon, stir for about two minutes. Taste & add more if desired (for a ricotta-substitute use only about 1T salt).

Turn the cheese back to the cloth and strain further. Place the cheese ball and cloth in a mold (like a clean terra-cotta pot), and place something heavy on it. Or, you may hang it in your refrigerator.

Notes about cheese making:

- Cleanliness is crucial to health. Make sure that all utensils and bowls are sterilized before using. Don’t use wood, and be very careful with plastic. Wood cannot be germ-free and plastic is hard to keep germ-free.
- Use cold water and soap to wash off all utensils: then sterilize it with bleach or very hot water. The proteins will glue themselves to your tools in the presence of heat.
- The lower the temperature, the slower the curd will form. If you need to stop the rennet enzyme, place the milk in the freezer: typically, rennet becomes inactive below 70º.
- If you want to flavor the cheese with spices or herbs (oregano, garlic, thyme, sage, red pepper, etc.) you may add them while you salt it. Also, make sure you use fresh ingredients—it will ensure a clean curd and a fresh taste. Note: don’t use dry-powder garlic, fresh pureed garlic or garlic oil tastes better.
- Temperature is critical for getting the beneficial bacteria to grow. Acidophillus grows best between 45º-105º. The higher temperature during preparation is for the rennet enzyme.
- “Cheddaring” is the process of making the curd firmer and more elastic (like cheddar or “squeeky” cheeses). This is accomplished by taking the unsalted curd and carefully warming it to 100º-105ºF (115º-120ºF for squeeky cheese). Make sure you turn the curd over a couple times.
• Use only plastic (see note above), glass or stainless steel. Copper, iron (steel), tin or aluminum will actually dissolve minutely and will ruin a great cheese. Absolutely do not use wood.
• Keep in mind that cream will curd as well. For soft cheeses and if your recipe needs a creamier cheese, consider using a skim milk for the cheese, and then, add a few tablespoons of cream while salting it. For hard cheeses, you can add cream during the ripening stage (be careful with the curd while stirring, bruised curds will release the butter fat).
• If you want to store the cheese for a long time (longer than 10 days), you have to be extra careful with a clean environment. [If you ever have a doubt with cheese, don’t eat it!] Also, you must remove as much liquid as possible, like using a cheese press. After which, wax it with a beeswax or low-temperature wax. Cheese will pretty much keep for years in wax—it just gets sharper.
• Be careful with adding sugar. We want the bacteria/yeast to work on the curd—not the sugar.
• Making cheese is not cheaper that buying it. However, it is very delicious, you can control the salt and spice, and you know what’s in the recipe.
• If you have any doubts with the milk before starting, pasteurize the milk. Once the milk’s temperature drops to 100ºF, go ahead with the cheese making.
• Cooking with this cheese gives a very different texture. It softens but will remain chewy. I tried it with open-face grilled tomato and pepper—¡supremísimo! It also substituted quite well for cottage cheese and ricotta.

Glossary:

Acidophillus - One of many beneficial bacteria that live on lactose. They produce lactic acid which aids in curdling the cheese.
Rennet - An enzyme that “cuts” the soluble part of the milk solids yielding two molecules: casein and lactose. It is found in all mammalian stomachs. It also can be made from thistle milk.
Casein - One of the milk solids found in milk making the milk appear white. Most common cheeses are made from this protein.
Pasteurization - A technique to kill all pathogenic organisms in milk without affecting the taste and nutrients. Milk is heated to 145ºF for exactly 30 minutes, then it is cooled quickly by immersing the pot in cold water while stirring.
Curd - Any milk solids that come from milk coagulation.
Whey - A yellow-greenish liquid which contains mostly water (about 90%), milk sugars (lactose), soluble proteins (albumenous proteins which is extracted to make ricotta), and minerals.
Cheese - A solid food made from milk. It can be casein, albumen, or lactose & minerals.
Pathogens - Any of a variety of harmful or deadly organisms which are usually found in milk. These include: yeast and coliform bacteria.
Inoculant - An added bacteria or fungus that adds a special flavor. Examples of cheeses with inoculants are: Swiss, camembert, brie, brick, bleu, and limburger.
Lasagna (using the fresh cheese)

1 lb. Hot Italian sausage, removed from skins
½ C Chopped onion
1 clove Garlic
1 16oz Can of tomatoes, cut up
1 8oz Can of tomato sauce
1 6oz Can of tomato paste
2 t Oregano
8 Lasagna noodles (two extra in case of tearing)
2 Eggs
2½ C Ricotta cheese or 1 recipe of Farmers cheese with ½ C water
¾ C Grated parmesan
2 T Dried parsley flakes
1 lb. Mozzarella, sliced thinly

Cook meat, onion and garlic until meat is browned. Drain off fat. Stir in the undrained tomatoes, sauce, paste, oregano and salt. Cover; simmer for 15 minutes. Meanwhile cook noodles until tender in boiling unsalted water. Drain and rinse noodles in cold water (don’t let them sit in the water). Beat eggs; add farmers cheese (or ricotta), ½ C of the parmesan, the parsley, 1 t salt and ½ t pepper.

Layer half the noodles in a 13x9” baking dish. Cover with half the cheese mixture. Layer that with half the mozzarella. Then spread half the sauce on top of that. Repeat layers. Sprinkle with remaining parmesan.

Bake at 375º for 30 to 35 min. if warm. If refrigerated, cook for 45 min. or until hot. Let stand for 10 minutes. Serves 10.
# Cheese Types & Preparations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ripening (100°F)</th>
<th>Incubation</th>
<th>Cutting</th>
<th>Cooking</th>
<th>Draining</th>
<th>Salting</th>
<th>Pressing</th>
<th>Drying</th>
<th>Curing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yogurt</td>
<td>1 qt. Milk; ¼C yogurt</td>
<td>18-24 hours</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>V.Fine mesh: hang.</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Yogurt Cheese</td>
<td>1 gal. Milk; 1C yogurt</td>
<td>18-24 hours</td>
<td>When firm, stir until smooth.</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Very fine mesh: hang.</td>
<td>1 Tbsp. (optional)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cottage (soft)</td>
<td>1 gal. Milk; 1C yogurt</td>
<td>18-24 hours</td>
<td>Cut when firm; ½ inch cubes.</td>
<td>Raise slowly to 115°F</td>
<td>Fine mesh: strain.</td>
<td>1 Tbsp. (optional)</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ripening (90°F)</th>
<th>Rennet¹</th>
<th>Cutting</th>
<th>Cooking</th>
<th>Draining</th>
<th>Salting</th>
<th>Pressing²</th>
<th>Drying</th>
<th>Curing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cottage (firm)</td>
<td>¼ tablet ¼C 90°F water</td>
<td>Cut when firm; ½ inch cubes.</td>
<td>Raise slowly to 100°F</td>
<td>Fine mesh: strain.</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers</td>
<td>¼ tablet ¼C 90°F water</td>
<td>Cut when firm; ½ inch cubes.</td>
<td>Raise slowly to 100°F</td>
<td>Fine mesh: strain.</td>
<td>1 Tbsp.</td>
<td>1 Tbsp.</td>
<td>Until surface dry.</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheddar</td>
<td>¼ tablet ¼C 90°F water</td>
<td>Cut when firm; ½ inch cubes.</td>
<td>Raise slowly to 100°F</td>
<td>Fine mesh: strain. Return to pot and stir with fingers for 30 min. @ 100°F</td>
<td>1 Tbsp.</td>
<td>1 Tbsp.</td>
<td>Until surface dry.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gouda</td>
<td>¼ tablet ¼C 90°F water</td>
<td>Cut when firm; ½ inch cubes.</td>
<td>Raise slowly to 100°F. After, draw off 8C whey &amp; add 8C water at same temp (3 times)</td>
<td>Fine mesh: strain. (soak 12 hrs. in brine after pressing)</td>
<td>(soak 12 hrs. in brine after pressing)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Until surface dry.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
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**Mozzarella (experimental)**
2 gal. whole milk & 1 qt. heavy cream. Heat milk and cream to 170°F. Dissolve 2 Tbsp. citric acid in ¼C water. Add to hot milk slowly while stirring. Gather filaments together into a ball. Using rubber gloves (it will burn) pull and stretch the cheese until blistered. Soak in brine 1 hr.

**Ricotta**
2 gal. Fresh whey & 1 qt. whole milk. Heat milk and whey until 180°F. Add ¼C cider or white vinegar. Continue to heat up to about 200°F. Remove from heat and pour slowly into very fine mesh cloth. Yields about 1-1½C.

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1 For best results, use kosher salt. Don’t use iodized salt.
2 Make sure you pasteurize milk for all fresh (non-aged) cheeses. The soft cheeses may be “enriched” by adding 1C nonfat dry milk for every quart.
3 Rennet cannot tolerate chlorinated tap water: use distilled or filtered water. Coagulation requires about 1 hour.
4 Usually, you will take 30 minutes just raising the temperature, while stirring. After reaching the desired temperature, continue stirring gently for another 30 minutes.
5 Turn over the cheese between each new weight.