

CHEESE-A-HOLIC Issue 6



CHEESELINKS

The ultimate newsletter for cheese enthusiasts, cheesemakers and cheese-a-holics everywhere!

CHEESE-A-HOLIC

May 22nd 2009

FROM THE EDITORS

Boy the year goes fast! It's hard to believe it's May already. As winter approaches and the weather starts to cool down, we think it is perfect cheesemaking season—here in the south of Australia, where the temperature hovers between 8-15 degrees for the next several months you can mature your cheeses perfectly without using a fridge or cellar! It brings down the cost of production, and makes means you can make even more.

Cheeselinks have had a busy few months, with workshops in New South Wales, ACT, Queensland, Western Australia and of all over Victoria. Carole was overjoyed to judge at two home cheesemaking

competitions in March—the Bemboka show and the Red Hill Show and she was so impressed by the calibre of the entrants. Home cheesemaking throughout Australia just gets better and better every year.

There were some delightfully complex flavours and some wonderfully creative cheeses presented, from Hazelnut and Dried Fruit Cheese to Montasio, from Chevre to Marinated Goat's Fetta. See page 5 for more details about the prize winning cheeses.

Issue 6 of Cheese-a-holic finally brings our issue discussing pasteurisation of milk, which is an issue full of emotion for lots of cheese lovers around the world. Here in Australia there has long been controversy over the issue, because of the ban on

importing and making many cheeses made from raw milk. But not all raw milk cheese in Australia is banned, and in the midst of emotion and heated debates, there is also a lot of misinformation, and a lot of misconceptions about this. This month we have put together an overview of the facts and the opinions on both sides of the pasteurisation debate. We know it's a heated issue, and we are looking forward to your feedback. We will be publishing the

letters we get next edition!

Tracy and Carole Willman



SPECIALS AND NEW PRODUCTS

Yoghurt Kits come free a free pack of Kefir culture for a limited time only!

Our yoghurt kits have proven really popular, and we have had so many positive responses about the yoghurt makers and the delicious, home-made yoghurt that you can make. And until June 30, 2009 for every yoghurt kit purchased we are giving away a pack of Kefir Culture worth \$10.00 absolutely free.

Each kit contains:

- A pack of yoghurt culture powder - enough for 250L of yoghurt
- A sterile bottle to store the culture powder once the pack is opened
- An Easy Yoghurt Maker

- Instructions and recipe ideas



Our Cheese Presses are NOW AVAILABLE —We LOVE our cheese press design for the following reasons. Firstly, you can press multiple cheeses at once.

Secondly, there are sixteen different holes in the press, so you can adjust the post to fit the entire range of our hard cheese baskets. Thirdly, you can manually adjust the pressure by placing however much weight on top you need. We tend to use a bucket

filled with water, as seen in the photo, which means that the weight is flexible depending on how much water you add. The presses are made from marine timber, designed for use in the ocean, so it doesn't buckle when the why drains out! We recommend that you treat it yourself with any food grade oil you have in your kitchen. You do this in the same way that you would treat a wooden chopping board. Just rubbing the oil into the surface is the best way of maintaining the press in good nick.



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Letters/Problem solving/Q&A Section

I'm so confused by all the information I'm finding online about Mozzarella.... Many recipes suggest leaving the curd overnight before stretching, but your recipe says to stretch straight away... I'm having trouble getting my curd to stretch and I wonder if waiting overnight like the other recipes say could help?

When to stretch Mozzarella is a common issue, even with more experienced cheesemakers. In order to get Mozzarella to stretch, the pH is critical. You only have a small window—the curd with only stretch

between pH 5.4 to 5.0. The milk that you start with generally has a pH of about 6.5-6.8. After adding starter, the bacteria consume lactose and produce acid and pH starts to drop. If you wait too long, it might already have gone past 5.0 and the curd will be too acidic, making it is impossible to reverse. If your acid production happens too quickly (can happen if you are adding too much starter) then this could be your issue. On the other hand, if you are trying to stretch too early then it will be fine, you just need to wait and keep testing the curd every few minutes, and you

will feel when it gets to the point you will be able to stretch it. You can use pH test strips to test this, or if you follow the recipe and check the curd regularly for stretchability you might not need to.



With regards to the stretching of mozzarella, it reaches maximum stretch about 7 days from manufacture. The degree of stretch you get on the cheese will also be related to how well it stretches when you are making it. The recipes that suggest leaving the mozzarella curd overnight are generally American – this is because in the US there are companies that make Mozzarella curd and then all send it to a central factory for stretching. If it is left at room temperature overnight then it will have far too much starter activity and the pH will drop below the range

required in order to stretch. This is why mozzarella curd is refrigerated or even frozen if you need to delay the stretching process because of transportation. but the only reason the recipes says to wait is because it needs to be moved to the stretching factory first and it is refrigerated or frozen so that it stops producing acid and when you warm it up again the pH will continue to drop again, and when you hit the right acidity level you will be able to stretch it.

my mum is happy with her mozzarella, she wants to try to make bocconcini. Could you tell me what the difference is?

The big difference between Mozzarella and Bocconcini is that bocconcini is higher moisture. This means that when you make it, you either cut the curd bigger or don't stir the curd as much. Also make sure that you don't stretch too much as this also drives out moisture.

Our mozzarella cheese has now improved and in top quality. Since

I have been making cheeses ever since doing a course with you in



WA in 2007, with lots of success and compliments. My problem is this: whenever I make blue cheese I end up with plenty of lovely blue mould all over the outside of the cheese but

nothing through where I poked the holes. They taste good, but why no blue through the cheese? What am I doing wrong? I double check the instructions and follow them to the t, but still no blue through the cheese - help! I have tried many of the cheese recipes from your book and even been successful making Haloumi and even Mozzarella. Everyone who tries the cheeses always say how much more flavour there is compared to the commercially produced cheeses. I've been asked by friends to make cheese all the time, but for me at the moment

it's an enjoyable marvellous hobby. Thank you so much for opening this fascinating door for me. I love cheesemaking!

There can be a number of reasons for this. The main reason is usually that there isn't enough air getting inside the cheese, and you have many options to deal with this. You can try making the holes a little bigger or re-piercing the cheeses a little later. Sometimes the holes can fill up near the surface of the cheese and then there isn't enough air



Problem solving/Q&A Section

inside the cheese to grow the mould. It can also be that there isn't enough movement of air inside the cheese then the air gets used up and not replaced. If this is the case, making the holes bigger should help. Also trying to get a little more openness in the cheese should help. Make sure you drain all the whey off before putting the curd into the hoop. Breaking apart the curd with your hands before placing it lightly in the hoops helps to get more air pockets naturally throughout the cheese. If necessary you can repeat this

process several times, placing the curd back into the vat and breaking it apart with your hands before re-hooping. And of course, make sure that you don't press the cheese at all, as this will press out the openness that you need to grow blue. We've recently discovered a great product that we import specially from Europe that is specifically designed to help to produce 'eyes' in blue vein cheese, which promotes blue growth beautifully and evenly throughout the cheese. It is called Sigma 30 and we have it available for \$18 for a 150L vial. Other reasons can be the cheese is too dry

or the temperature isn't right, but if the cheese is blue on the outside it usually isn't the problem.

Last month I made the feta recipe and it turned out just terrific, even keeping it at 4 degrees C. I soak enough for one meal in a couple of changes of filtered water before use, just 20 minutes or so; this releases enough salt to make the feta delicious.— Inge



SPECIALS AND NEW PRODUCTS cont.



Mystery Pack of Wraps—For a limited time only we are selling a mystery pack of wraps. Like a lucky dip, you get whatever combination happens to be in the pack. There are packs of at least 20 cheese wraps (some packs contain more, so cross your fingers and you might strike it lucky in your lucky dip!) The mystery wraps cost \$8 each and are available online!

shop.cheeselinks.com.au



Classifieds

Boosey Creek Cheese (in the Yarrowonga region) is looking for an assistant cheesemaker to work in their cheese factory — so if there are any cheesemakers in the region who want to apply please contact them directly on 03 5748 4374 to express your interest.

To pasteurise or not to pasteurise, that is the question!



Pasteurisation is an issue that is always contentious in the hearts and minds of cheese lovers throughout the world. The issue has been so clouded with emotion and half truths, at times circulated by certain cheesemakers and by journalists and some of those who sell cheese, which leaves most people, even well-educated cheese-a-holics, unsure of what the facts about pasteurisation really are.

So we'd like to use this article to educate our readers about what pasteurisation is, how it affects milk and cheese, and debunk some of the myths.

When milk is pasteurised it is heated and held at a high temperature for a set amount of time. This kills harmful bacteria, including E-coli, salmonella, listeria, campylobacter and more, which can grow to dangerous levels. The reason that the government has mandated pasteurisation in the past is because without pasteurisation the it is more likely harmful bacteria are present in the finished cheese. There is general consensus that raw milk cheese should not be eaten by those who are pregnant, immune-deficient, or under the age of two.

However, along with destroying pathogens, pasteurisation also destroys a few desirable enzymes, bacteria, yeasts and moulds – some of these can create the unique flavours, textures, and aromas of

traditional cheese.

It has been said that no specialty cheese industry in the world could have developed without raw milk, because raw milk cheeses essentially reflect the area they come from. Cheeses traditionally developed distinct characteristics in different regions because of differences in the milk, the grass, the environment, climate conditions, temperatures of storage.

Most of the desirable enzymes survive pasteurization, and some that are destroyed, like many bacteria, yeasts and moulds present in raw milk can be reintroduced after pasteurisation. Pasteurisation is preferred by many manufacturers because it enables standardisation of milk, which means that you start with a blank slate, so to speak, and can create different flavours by introducing



different cultures, yeasts and moulds and combining this with the different temperatures and procedures. It enables one cheese factory to produce a range of different cheeses using exactly the same milk.

But at the moment there are no commercially available cheeses that completely reproduce all of the characteristics of raw milk cheeses. Isolating the right culture to make pasteurized milk cheeses taste just like raw milk cheeses has been successfully achieved by the French, and these cultures are actually available in some countries. According to French researchers, the raw milk cheeses of

France lost much of their typical flavour when the milk standards of France had to improve (a condition of joining the European Union). They now have isolated the bacteria from raw milk that are responsible for raw milk flavour and are adding them back to raw milk to recreate the typical raw milk flavours in their cheese. The same bacteria can also be added to pasteurised milk to make them taste like raw milk cheeses.

So why are some people determined that raw milk cheese is better? For many people raw milk cheeses are preferred because of tradition, because of the history. Others will tell you that the flavours of raw milk cheeses are 'unparalleled' and that the flavour of raw

However, I think there is tendency to generalise and romanticise all raw milk cheeses as the epitome of quality. But the truth is, I've tried some absolutely dreadful raw milk cheeses and some absolutely delightful pasteurised milk cheeses (and vice versa). I think it is naive to consider all raw milk cheeses to be superior to all pasteurized milk cheeses simply because they are made in the traditional way.

If you ask any cheesemaker they will tell you that whether or not milk is pasteurised is only one of a multitude of factors that will determine the quality and flavour of the cheese. Give ten cheesemakers the same milk and the same cultures and you'll get ten completely different cheeses.



organisms as well) means that the gap between unpasteurised and pasteurised milk cheeses is getting smaller and smaller.

It is a commonly held myth that Australian cheesemakers are frustrated because the law won't allow them to use unpasteurised milk. But very few of the cheesemakers that we speak to have indicated that they would be interested in making cheese from unpasteurised milk. An ASCA (Australian Specialist Cheesemakers Association) study completed in 2003 showed that only 6% of cheesemakers showed any enthusiasm for using raw milk... which means there was 94% that either didn't care or didn't want it.

The reasons are related to a number of

factors. Firstly, the level of testing required to guarantee the safety of raw milk cheese is excessive, with it adding considerably to the cost of the product. In factories in Europe, they have to do thousands of tests each year. Nothing goes in untested, nothing comes out untested—and they complain bitterly about the cost.

Also, with unpasteurised milk, the success rate at making the required flavour characteristics is not as high as with pasteurised milk, because the flavour is influenced by uncontrollable factors in the milk. This means that there is a much higher percentage of 'rejects' that must be thrown away, which also increases the costs. The 'rejects' are not always due to food safety, but also because of cheeses

not meeting required flavour or quality standards.

Also, it is a myth that no unpasteurised milk cheeses are made here or imported. Certain unpasteurised milk cheeses are allowed to be made and imported, and they have been for years. The FSANZ (Food Standards Australia New Zealand) regulations now have a provision that states cheese can be made/imported from raw milk providing that an equivalent level of safety is achieved to that using heat treated milk. Cheeses such as Gruyère, Sbrinz, and Emmentaler, Grana Padano and Parmigiano Reggiano, and Parmesan-style cheeses all fall into this category. Raw milk Roquefort is also allowed to be imported for the same reason.

There are still many raw milk cheeses that fall out of the special provisions. High

moisture cheeses such as Normandy Camembert and Brie de Meux, are raw milk cheeses that we can't legally make here, or import. And while I would love to be able to wander down to the shops and buy both of these at the supermarket, the concerns are about improperly trained cheesemakers and the ability to produce these cheeses safely in a domestic market. The cheesemakers of France that are making these cheeses have three years technical training, then they work with a master cheesemaker for several years before they can make cheese on their own. Until we can replicate the same level of training and knowledge for our cheesemakers here in Australia so we can guarantee these cheeses are made safely, I am happy to have FSANZ insist on pasteurised milk in all our soft cheeses, whether at a supermarket or cellar door. I

continue to advise people making cheese at home to pasteurise their milk. If home cheesemakers are making cheese from raw milk, I would hope that it is being done very carefully, that people know and trust their source of milk, and that there is awareness of the risks involved. Maybe people will think that makes me less of a cheese connoisseur than those passionately arguing for raw milk cheeses to be readily available. I just think it makes me a little bit sensible.

By Tracy Willman





Bringing cheese and yoghurt making to the kitchens of Australia!

Cheeselinks is an Australian business that is both family-owned and operated. The company was established in 1986 as Home Cheesemaking Supplies, specifically to provide quality cheesemaking ingredients and education to people who wanted to learn to make cheese in their own homes. Over time the business expanded and began to supply small cheese factories with cultures, baskets, and other equipment. The name was changed to Cheeselinks in 1999, to reflect the increasing service provided to commercial manufacturers. With master cheesemaker Carole Willman at the helm, Cheeselinks has over 20 years experience in cheesemaking training and education, serving both commercial cheese manufacturers, and people making cheese and yoghurt at home.



HOME CHEESEMAKING SHOW RESULTS



The last couple of months have seen a flurry of activity in the home cheesemaking world, with three home cheesemaking competitions in Red Hill (VIC) Bemboka (NSW) and Robertson (NSW).

We have been overjoyed to hear that so many of the prize winners have been students of Carole's—with virtually all of the awards given to Cheeselinks' customers. Many of the prize winners were brand new home cheesemakers, but of course, there were also a number of long-timers that have been perfecting their techniques and recipes over years!

We would like to congratulate all who submitted cheeses for judging, and we hope to see many more of you next year. Of course, we would like to make special mention of the prize winners at these competitions.

Bemboka Show—

Isobel Piper won the ribbon for most successful exhibitor at Bemboka, as well as the champion cheese of the whole show. She won received awards for her Chevre (1st) Crottin (2nd), Hazelnut and dried fruit log (1st), Montasio (1st), Normandy Camembert (1st), Blue Vein (1st) and Goat's Cheddar (1st)! **Megan Jordan-Jones** received prizes for her Marinated Goat's Fetta (2nd) and Modern Camembert (2nd). **Fred Gasson** received 2nd place for

his Colby; **Patrick Reubinson** received 2nd place for his soft blue cheese and **Richard Hobbs** also received 2nd place for his Spiced Quark, Marinated Goat's Fetta. **Deb Campbell** won 1st prize for her Marinated Goat's Fetta and 2nd for her Traditional Goat Fetta, and **Judith Norton** won 1st place for her Traditional Fetta.

Red Hill Show—

Robyn Elliot won 1st prize for her Blue Vein. **Paul Calleja** won 1st place for his Parmesan and 1st for his parmesan with pepper, as well as best presented cheese for the show with his Blue Vein. **Bruce Charlton** won 1st place for his washed rind cheese. **Janet McDonald** won 1st place for her camembert and feta entries, and **Isobel Piper** won first with her quarg with fruit log and 2nd places for her Marinated Goat's Fetta, Mascarpone, Blue Vein, Goat Chilli Cheddar and Goat Romano. **Wendy White** received 2nd for her goat's camembert.

Robertson Show—

Peter Hammet won awards for Camembert (1st place), Blue Vein (2nd), Washed Rind (2nd), Cheshire Cheddar (1st), Farmhouse Cheddar (2nd) and Wensleydale (1st). **Cookie Lloyd** won 2nd place for her fresh curd. **Marueen Foster** won 1st place for her yoghurt and 1st for her fresh curd. **Heike Schuster** won 1st for her Blue Vein, which also won the champion cheese for the show. **Susan Stannard** won 2nd for her yoghurt and **Cressida and Micahel McNamara** won 2nd in the hard/semi cooked style section.



WHAT'S ON MAY/JUNE 2009

May 23	Romano, Yoghurt and Ricotta Workshop at Red Hill, VIC
May 24	Camembert, Quarg, Mascarpone and Ricotta Workshop at Red Hill
May 25	Mozzarella, Halloumi and Ricotta Workshop at Little River
May 26	Mozzarella, Halloumi and Ricotta Workshop at Little River
May 30	Romano Workshop at Yinnar South, Gippsland, VIC
May 31	Triple Cream Brie Workshop in Yinnar South, Gippsland, VIC
June 6	Camembert, Quarg, Mascarpone and Ricotta Workshop at Witches Chase Cheese, QLD
June 7	Blue Vein, Sour Cream and Ricotta Workshop at Witches Chase Cheese, QLD
June 12	Mozzarella, Halloumi and Ricotta Workshop at Little River
June 13	Cheddar Workshop at Little River
June 20 -21	Two-Day Workshop - Parmesan, Halloumi, Mozzarella, Ricotta at Small Cow Farm, Robertson, NSW
June 28	Blue Vein, Sour Cream and Ricotta at Wingham, NSW
June 29	Washed Rind, Fromage Frais and Ricotta at Wingham, NSW