

Title:

Cheese Making Through the Ages

Word Count:

546

Summary:

Cheesemaking has evolved over the years. Here is a brief history.

Keywords:

cheese, cheesemaking, history of cheesemaking

Article Body:

The many different types of cheeses available mean there is something to suit every taste. It is generally believed that cheese was first made in the Middle East. Legend has it that a nomadic Arab made cheese by accident when a saddlebag filled with milk fermented due to the hot sun and the galloping movement of his horse.

Early cheeses were not the solid products we eat today. They were simple curds and whey, like what Little Miss Muffet ate. The curd is the solid part while the whey is liquid.

Workmen making cheese are depicted in Egyptian hieroglyphics. In ancient times, the whey was eaten immediately while the curd was salted or dried for preservation. The Roman Legion helped spread the art of cheesemaking throughout Europe and England. The monasteries and feudal estates of Europe made great improvements in cheesemaking during the Middle Ages. Many of the classic varieties of cheese enjoyed today were developed by monks. During the Renaissance, cheese decreased in popularity because it was considered unhealthy. By the nineteenth century, sentiment had changed and cheese production moved from farms to factories. No one involved in the early history of cheese could have imagined that today people would buy cheese online.

While most cheeses are mass produced today, some artisanal cheeses are still made by hand using old-fashioned techniques. When you buy cheese online, it is possible to deal directly with the people who make the cheese.

How cheese is made today

Cheese can be made from the milk of cows, goats, sheep and even buffaloes. The

basic principle involved in making natural cheese is to curdle the milk so it forms into curds and whey. Contemporary cheesemaking methods stimulate the curdling process by using a starter, which is a bacterial culture that produces lactic acid, and rennet, a coagulating enzyme to speed up the separation of liquids and solids. Different bacterial cultures are used depending on the type of cheese being made.

The least sophisticated types of cheese for sale are the fresh, unripened varieties like cottage cheese. These are made by warming milk and letting it stand, treating it with a lactic starter to help the acid development and then draining the whey. The cheese is eaten fresh. This is the simplest form of cheese.

For more complex cheeses, bacterial cultures are used to lower the pH or acidify the cheese. It is important to make sure the right amount of acid is produced or the cheese's texture will be poor. At this point, the cheese will begin to coagulate and form curds and whey. The process is enhanced by adding rennet.

The curd is then heated and cut, allowing whey to escape. The curd hardens before it is salted, shaped and pressed. Depending on the variety, the cheese will then be aged or ripened for different amounts of time. Bacteria are still growing in the cheese, resulting in flavor and texture changes.

Cheese rinds are formed during the ripening process, often naturally. The rind's main function is protecting the interior of the cheese while allowing it to ripen harmoniously. Its presence does affect the final flavor of the cheese. Every variety of cheese for sale has gotten to market after being made through some variation of this process.