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Smile! June 4th is National Cheese Day!

Cheese is made by heating milk (cow, goat, and/or sheep), adding mold for some cheeses, ripening with cultures, curdling with enzymes (rennin) or acidic ingredient (lemon juice, vinegar), and separating the curds from the whey.

Cheeses made in America fit these basic categories:

- Fresh or slightly cured: mascarpone, ricotta, chèvre, feta, cream cheese, cottage cheese
- Soft-ripened: brie, Camembert, triple crèmes
- Semi-soft: blue cheese, Colby, fontina, Havarti, Monterey Jack
- Firm/Hard: Gouda, cheddar, Swiss, Gruyere, Parmesan, raw milk cheeses (must be aged more than 60 days)

The challenge of storing cheese is that naturally-released moisture accumulates on its surface. As the moisture evaporates, the cheese dries out. Plastic wrap keeps the moisture from evaporating but the surface grows mold. What to do? 1) Buy only as much cheese as you can consume within a few days. 2) Double wrap it in waxed or parchment paper plus a loose wrap of aluminum foil. Keeps an extra two weeks. 3) Freeze Camembert and low-moisture mozzarella, tightly wrapped in plastic, for up to a month, maybe more. For other cheeses, freezing even for a few days mutes the flavor and changes the texture.

Making cheese at home is magical and delicious. A fresh cheese such as ricotta is a good place to start. Just like other make-it-at-home activities—canning, preserving, brewing—cleanliness is the first step. Be sure to sterilize your work surfaces and all of your equipment before you begin. Then with a few ingredients and within a few minutes, your first curds appear.

RECIPE for health

JUNE 2016

featured food:

CHEESE

Homemade Ricotta Cheese

By Corporate Chef Kurt Kwiatkowski, Residential Dining Services

Makes about 1 pound (2 cups)

- 8 c. whole milk
- 1¼ c. heavy cream
- 5T. freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 1½ t. kosher salt
- ¼ t. fresh cracked black pepper

Combine milk, cream, and 1 teaspoon salt in a heavy bottomed pot. Bring to a simmer over medium heat making sure to stir frequently so you don't burn the milk.

Reduce heat to medium-low. Add 4 tablespoons of lemon juice. Let simmer, stirring constantly until the mixture begins to curdle, about 3 to 5 minutes

Remove from heat and let stand undisturbed for about 5 minutes. Line a strainer with 3 layers of cheesecloth and set it in the sink. Carefully scoop the large chunks or curds into the strainer, and then gently pour the liquid into the strainer.

Set strainer with cheese curds in a bowl and move to refrigerator; let drain for 1 ½ hours. Transfer cheese to a clean, large bowl. Gently fold in 1 tablespoon lemon juice, ½ teaspoon salt, and black pepper to finish seasoning the cheese.

- Join us in person at Brody Square Demo Kitchen. Sign-up at health4u@msu.edu.
- Watch online: alumni.msu.edu/livestream.