

Make Your Own Cheese
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UCCE El Dorado County Master Food Preservers

Most major supermarkets today proudly offer a wide array of cheeses from around the world, and some of these cheeses result from many months of processing by experienced cheesemakers. Making cheese at home, however, can be relatively simple. The Master Food Preservers of El Dorado County offer a cheese making class on August 25th, to be held at the UCCE Office at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. The class will be repeated on Tuesday, September 4th at the Marshall Grange, 4940 Marshall Road in Garden Valley. Both classes run from 10:00 a.m. to noon and include instructions and demonstrations of techniques.

To sterilize cheese making instruments, follow these instructions from the MFPs; “Immerse equipment in boiling water for up to five minutes. Wooden items such as cheese boards and mats should be boiled for at least twenty minutes. Plastic (even food grade) equipment should not be boiled or steamed. These should be sterilized with a solution of household bleach mixed in the proportion of two Tbsp. of bleach to one gallon of water. Bleach may also be used with glass and stainless steel equipment. Rinse thoroughly after using bleach... dampen a cloth with the bleach solution and wipe all of the counter areas you will be using.”

Soft cheeses such as Ricotta and Mozzarella taste unbelievably good when made fresh at home. A double-boiler, some stainless steel spoons, a good thermometer that can measure from 20°F to 220°F, cheesecloth or muslin, along with enamel-lined, glass or stainless steel bowls comprise the equipment needed. Make sure that all utensils, containers and boards have been sterilized, as the major reason for failure when making cheese at home continues to be unclean or unsterile equipment. Although Mozzarella takes a few days to make, Ricotta can be processed in the morning and cooked into a lasagna that night. This recipe for Ricotta Cheese, from the MFP of El Dorado County files, makes everyone a master cheesemaker:

RICOTTA CHEESE

1 gallon fresh whole milk

¼ cup apple cider vinegar

¼ to ½ tsp. non-iodized coarse or kosher salt (to taste)

Heat the milk to 185° F. Remove from heat. While stirring the milk add the vinegar. Tiny curds will form very quickly. Pour this mixture into a cheesecloth-lined colander. Drain for 20 minutes. Mix in salt to taste. It will keep well in the refrigerator for approximately one week. For a creamy texture add a little heavy cream.

For questions about safe home food preservation, or to schedule a speaker for organizations or clubs on the topics of food safety or food preservation, call the Master Food Preservers at (530) 621-5506. For more information, be sure to go to the Master Food Preserver website at http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.org/Master_Food_Preservers/. Sign up to receive our new Master Food Preservers E-Newsletter at <http://ucanr.org/mfpnews/>.

Should assistance or special accommodations for any of our educational programs be required, please call (530) 621-5502.

