

Mozzarella

(by linuxboy)

Here is my mozz method, pasted from my post on dairygoatinfo. I wish direct acidification never made its way to the home cheesemaker. It works commercially for a very specific cheese type, and it's neat to see such fast results from the get-go with a first cheese, but overall, I have many issues with citric acid used to make mozz, the first of which is lack of flavor. If you have any time at all, try my method. It's not the one I actually use any more because I have better tools (pH meter, etc), but it's foolproof. It's sort of a hybrid between the 30 min mozz and a classic mozz because I don't use hot whey in this recipe. It's similar to how Fankhauser does his cultured mozz, but without heating the whey.

Ingredients

1 gallon of milk
1/3-1/2 cup either yogurt or buttermilk. Must be fresh and active. This is about a 2-4% starter inoculation.
1/8 tsp of double strength rennet or 1/4 tsp single strength
half cup of very cold bottled or distilled water
a cup of salt
a sanitized bowl or container that floats on water

Process

Take the milk and warm it to 95F if using yogurt, or 88F if using buttermilk. Take a few cups of the warm milk and mix in the yogurt or buttermilk. Mix thoroughly with a fork, so there are no lumps. Add this mixture to the milk and stir up and down until it's dissolved. Take the rennet and add to the cold water, stir it thoroughly. Then add to the milk and stir up and down 10-15 times. This is to mix everything up.

Cover up the milk and go away for 5-8 minutes. Then come back and put the sanitized bowl in the milk (something like an empty yogurt cup works well). It should float freely. Push it every 30 second or so. When you push it and it doesn't go, the milk has gelled at the surface. This is called the flocculation point. Note how long it took from the time you added rennet to the time it gelled. Multiply this time by 3. Wait that total time out, starting from the point where you added rennet. Example, you add rennet at noon, it gels at 12:10. $10 \times 3 = 30$. You wait until 12:30, and then cut. Cut into 1-2" long strips and let it sit for 10-15 minutes. Then come back and cut again, this time the curd should be about 1/2", about the size of peas. Use a whisk and gently cut if you want, or use a knife. remember to cut diagonally.

Start heating the curd, gently. If using buttermilk heat to 104 F from 88F over the course of at least 45 mins. If using yogurt, cook to 115-120F from 95F. Stir lightly as you cook so the curd doesn't stick together very much.

At the end of cooking, let the whole thing sit for 10-15 mins. The curd will settle. Take your

hand and gently press into the curd to mat it together. Then drain off the whey. Take the curd and squeeze it together in the cheesecloth. Press it together. It should hold its shape. Then, put it all into a bowl. Now cover the bowl with a plastic wrap or something so it doesn't dry, and leave the ball of curd in a warm place, 100F for buttermilk, 110F for yogurt starter. Wait an hour. Come back and cut off a piece of the curd and drain off the whey that has pooled around the curd ball. Put the piece you cut off in the microwave for 10-30 seconds (depends on microwave power). Pull on one end. Does it stretch? If it does, you're done. If not, flip the ball of curd and check back again in a half hour, then cut off another piece and nuke it. Keep waiting and checking every half hour until the curd stretches when you microwave it. Usually takes 2-4 hours. You could check less often, but until you're comfortable, check more frequently so you get it to work the first time and build up your confidence.

When the bit of curd does stretch, take the bowl with the curd in it cut up the curd into 1" chunks, and put it in the microwave. Start with 1 minute and try to fold the curd chunks together with a spatula. It should be hot and it should start to come together and be stretchy. Check the temp. Ideal temp is about 150F, or higher, up to 170. Keep folding the curd, and if necessary, heat in microwave again. Stretch with your hands if you want.

After you have the mozz ball made, take 4 cups of the whey and add a cup of salt into it and mix it in. It's okay if not all of it dissolves. Use less whey and salt if you want. Add some ice cubes to the brine. Plop the ball of cheese in it and wait for 5-10 mins, depending on how salty you want it. And you're done, wrap in something and refrigerate.

The natural and slow acidification produces a much superior cheese. With this method, even if your curds shatter, the mozz should still come out ok.