



MOZZARELLA

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If you are new to cheese making, please read [Beginning Cheese Making](#) carefully. Mozzarella is a challenging cheese and should not be attempted as your first cheese. I do not yet consider that I have perfected my mozzarellas to approach that which I have had in Italy, but the following recipe makes a fine tasting, tender, succulent approximation. Of course, they make theirs with water buffalo milk, which HAS to make a difference. The critical step is to get curds acid enough to "spin." I have had problems getting it to spin in the past, mostly (I believe) because the curd had not acidified enough. This recipe makes delicious mozzarella when proper spin is achieved. When it hasn't spun, the cheese is still good, but not what I was hoping for... I am eager to hear any improvements which you may offer to improve the process and/or product.

Ingredients:

- 1 gallon fresh milk (I use goats' milk. The classic Italian calls for water buffalo milk (I), but cow's will do.)
- 5 Tbl fresh yogurt starter (Dannon plain)
- 5 Tbl fresh cultured buttermilk
- 1 tablet Junket rennet
- salt

Apparatus:

- stainless steel pot with cover (about 1.5 gallon capacity)
(sterilized by boiling a small amount of water until steam rushes out from under the lid.)
- Dependable thermometer, range 0-100°C (32 - 212°F)
- Whisk
- long bladed knife for cutting curd
- table knife for finishing the cutting of the curd
- colander
- shallow glass baking pan
- Slotted spoon

1. [Warm milk to 32°C](#) in sterilized stainless steel covered pot. Meanwhile, [dissolve rennet in 1/4 c water](#).
2. [Blend yogurt and buttermilk](#) together, [add a small amount of milk](#), whisk into 32°C milk.
3. [Stir in dissolved rennet](#) thoroughly, cover, [let sit in warm spot until pecked \(clean break\)](#), about 45 minutes.
4. [Cut curd with clean knife into 1/2 inch cubes](#). (See my protocol for [basic cheese](#), steps 9 and 10 for precise instructions on cutting the curd).
5. Re-warm to 32°C with stirring, [cutting larger chunks of curd into smaller pieces with table knife](#). [Let sit 15 minutes](#).
6. [Pour off whey](#) (save for ricotta), add curd to 2 qts cold water to rinse, [drain in colander](#).

CRITICAL STEP FOR PROPER "SPINNING" OF THE CURD:

7. [Let sit at room temperature](#) to develop acidity. The last two times I have made it, I let it sit overnight, and it was ripe for "spinning." The final pH should be 5.3. You can monitor the acidification using pH paper with a range of about 4.8 to 6.2. (It might be ready in only 5-10 hours, but with goat's milk, overnight has worked best for me. You can tell that proper acidity is achieved when the curd, upon heating, "spins."

Checking for proper acidity using the "spinning" technique:

- a) Heat 2 c water to 85°C.
- b) [Drop several chunks of curd in](#), stir gently with a fork.
- c) Test for acidity by pulling and folding the hot curd. If it [softens and draws into straggles](#) ("spins"), and appears glossy on the surface, it is ready. If it [breaks when you pull it](#), let sit several more hours until it does.
8. Once the curd will "spin", [break or cut up the curd](#) into pieces about 1/2 inch diameter. Place cut curd back in shallow glass baking pan.

7. Heat 1/2 gallon water to 85°C.

8. Pour heated water over the curd, and stir with a slotted spoon. The temperature of the water should drop no lower than 57°C, but should not go above 60°C. As the curd warms, it should become more elastic, and finally "spin."

9. Press or put the hot cheese into pieces (mozzato in Italian) and form into balls about the size of a lemon (size depends on how you wish to use it. In Italy, they are most often about 2 inches in diameter). Stretch and fold over and over on itself to form thin layers. The balls should be glossy and smooth on the outside. Here is a finished ball of mozzarella.

10. Plunge into cold salted water (1 Tbl salt/quart) and store in the refrigerator a few hours to firm up. It may be stored for several days in this brine, but is best when it is freshest.

Ideally, when freshest mozzarella is cut, the thin "onion-like" layers of stretched should be visible, surface smooth and tight and a texture between rubbery and soft. The "onion" layers disappear after less than a day after making.

I believe that the problems I have had making mozzarella are primarily due to insufficient acidity in the curd. The result is a tough, rubbery mozzarella.

You may know that the classic and simple Neapolitan service of this delicious cheese is to slice it, and serve on slices of fully vine-ripened tomato slices, drizzled with olive oil and then balsamic vinegar, and finally sprinkled with fresh basil, salt and freshly ground pepper.

For further information, see:

Kitchen Cheesemaking by Lue Dean Flake, Jr, Stackpole Books, (1976), p. 72.

Mozzarella, in *La Cucina Italiana*, Vol 2, p. 36 (August 1997)

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