

Quick Start Guide to Making Camembert Cheese

1. Sanitize knife, spoon, cups, thermometer, racks and milk containers with 2 tablespoons of bleach in 1 gal of warm water. Or use a non-rinse sanitizer such as Star San.
2. Warm a gallon of whole milk (*plus 1/2 to 3/4 pint of heavy cream if you want a double cream cheese*) to 90F (32C).
3. Sprinkle Packet 1 onto the surface of the milk (Penicillium candidum, Geotrichum candidum and Mesophilic starter Culture). Wait a few minutes for the dry cultures to dissolve a bit.
4. Gently stir the milk to mix the cultures throughout the milk. Cover and leave the milk for 90 minutes at 90F while it ripens.
Note: Adding a little Calcium Chloride to the ripened milk just before you add the Rennet will help the milk coagulate, especially if you are using homogenized milk.
5. Gently sprinkle the contents of Packet 2 (dry calf rennet) on the surface of the milk. Gently stir the top 1/2 inch of the milk. This will dissolve the rennet throughout the milk and keep the cream from rising to the top. Cover and leave at 90F or until you get a clean break. This will take between 60 minutes and 2 hours.
6. To test for a clean break, dip the stirring spoon into the curd. When it is ready you will see a little whey separate from the curd. Using a sanitized knife, dice the curd front to back and then left to right. Cut the curd horizontally or stir them to cut the larger pieces until most of the pieces of curd are about 1/2 inch. At the end of the curd cutting, you should have small pieces of curd, about 1/2 to 3/4 inch floating in whey.
7. After cutting the curd, gently stir them for about 10 minutes, maintaining 90F. The whey will separate from the curd. Let it rest for a few minutes. This makes it easy to ladle off the whey.
8. Using a ladle, a large spoon or a glass, gently scoop out the whey, leaving the curds behind. After scooping out 40-60% of the whey, gently stir the curds one more time to keep them from setting up. This makes it easier to scoop them into the moulds.
9. Place the hard plastic draining rack on top of a draining container. Place the draining mat on top of the rack and place the food grade nylon draining bag onto the draining mats. Place the two plastic cheese moulds on top of the nylon material.
10. Using a slotted spoon, gently scoop the curds into the Camembert moulds, alternating moulds. Allow the excess whey to drain from each scoop of curds before putting the curds into the moulds. There will still be a bit of whey in each mould at this point.

11. Wait 1-2 hours, then with very clean hands carefully turn over the moulds so the whey can continue to drain.
12. Turn the mould over every 1-2 hours during the next 8 hours (turning 4-6 more times). The cheese will become more and more compressed.
13. Cover the moulds of draining cheese and leave them to drain overnight at 45-65F.
14. The next morning, check the cheeses. If they look firm and completely drained, the cheese is ready to be taken out of the moulds.
15. Remove the moulds, leaving the cheese on the draining mat.
16. Using coarse flaked salt, gently sprinkle a light coating of salt on the tops of the cheeses. Let them rest for 15-30 minutes. Turn them over and lightly salt the bottom and the sides of each cheese. After another 15-30 minutes, flip them over again and place them in the aging container.
17. Using clean hands, place the cheeses on the two layers of plastic grid mat. Put a little paper towel on the bottom of one end of the aging container to help soak up any draining liquid. Tilt up the aging container about an inch to allow any whey to drain away from the aging cheeses. Do not allow any drainage to directly contact the cheeses.
18. Cover the aging container with a lid. Place at 38-46F. The next morning, check the cheese; if you see water beading on the container ceiling, slide the cover off slightly. You may also drape a paper towel over the top of the container before putting on the lid. This will trap any moisture so it does not fall on the cheese.
19. After 7-14 days, white mold should be visible on the surfaces of the cheese. Turn the cheeses over periodically so that the mold does not grow into the mat material. Check every day.
20. The humidity level is important. The surface should be matt white. "Matt dry with no reflection" indicates too dry. Also if you see any hard yellowing on the edges of the cheese, they are drying too much, so close the container. You might even have to put a small container of water in the aging container. However, if it is too humid, moisture may bead on the container ceiling. If it falls on the cheese, a yellowish slime may develop on the surface. This can ruin the cheese. Also too high humidity may make a too thick rind.
21. At 12-18 days, there should be a full white bloom of mold and it is ready to wrap. Place a square of the wrap shiny side down. Place a cheese in the middle and gently fold in one side and then corners etc until the cheese is completely wrapped. Put the wrapped cheeses (folded side on the bottom) back onto the plastic rack in the aging container and cover completely (unless water beads up on the lid, then uncover slightly).
22. Continue to age at 40-48F for 2-3 weeks. You can test for readiness by cutting one in half and seeing if there is a creamy white/yellowish color throughout the cheese. If the interior still looks white and feels firmer and flaky not soft, then age a bit longer. Longer aging makes the cheese more complex.
23. Cheese can be stored at 33-45F. At the higher temp, the cheese will develop a stronger flavor. At the lower temperature, after another 30-45 days, they will become creamer and the color will change from a pale white to a pale yellow.