Washed Rind Cheese ala Spruce Bark Straps

This washed rind cheese recipe calls for washing the cheese in a light salt(*non-iodized*) brine using a non-hoppy beer like an ale (*Fat Tire Ale or similar*). The beer replaces the water usually used to make a brine. If you do want to use beer, substitute water instead. Follow the usage rate for the amount of culture, B-Linens and rennet you will use with the amount of milk you are using.

Milk: Whole pasteurized or raw along with 10% heavy cream(*can be ultra-pasteurized*).
Culture: Flora Danica or Mesophile Aroma Type B or MM 101-100 series or CHN-22.
Corynebacteria: B-Linens strain PLA preferred, yet you can use SR3 along with a strain of Geo. Candidum.
Calcium Chloride: (*optional/used with pasteurized/homogenized milk*). Dilute CC in a little clean water prior to using.
Rennet: Liquid preferred yet powdered Veal rennet will work. Dilute rennet in a little clean water prior to using.
Salt: non iodized. Heavy Brine: 2.75lb(1.25kg) of salt to one gallon(3.78l) of cold water. Light Brine: 2 tsp(9.8ml) salt to 12 oz(.35l) of beer or cold water.
Spruce Bark Straps: cut to fit the size of your cheese.
Beer: Fat Tire Ale or similar non-hoppy ale. Or for a more Belgian style

Instructions:
Warm milk to 86-88f(c). Sprinkle culture and yeast on top of milk, allowing them to thoroughly dissolve on the milk surface prior to stirring for 2-3 minutes. Ripen for one hour while holding 86-88f. Add Calcium Chloride and stir in for a minute. After 3-5 minutes add rennet and stir in using only 3-4 strokes. Cover and allow the milk to set to a gel. Test for clean break after 30-60 minutes. Cut curd into ½ in(cm) pieces and allow the curds to rest(heal) for 5-10 minutes. Gently stir the curds intermittently while slowly heating the curds and whey to 98f(c). This should take approximately 30 minutes. Allow the curds to settle below the surface for 5-10 minutes. The heat should now be off. Drain about 30-40% of the whey. Hoop the curds, allowing the curds to drain well prior to placing into your hoops. After hooping press lightly using something you can hold in your hand (DO NOT USE A CHEESE PRESS) to help the curds settle down. Turn the hoops over every hour or so until they seem much firmer and could be taken out of the hoops without deforming. This may be the next day if you started in the morning. When you can take them out of the hoops, place them into a heavy salt brine for one hour for every one pound cheese. While you're brining, heat some water to near boiling and carefully place the Spruce Bark Straps into the water. Allow the strap to soften before placing the entire strap into your pot of hot water. If a strap breaks, you can still use it by overlapping it around the cheese. Once the straps are soft enough and have thickened to twice their thickness, take the cheeses from the brine and wrap one strap around each cheese, using a rubber band or butchers twine to secure it lightly. DO NOT OVER TIGHTEN. Age at 55f(13c) at 85%rH in a covered container in your wine fridge or dedicated fridge or cool area. Make a light brine using either water or beer and salt. For more flavor, use a malty Belgian Ale, one that is not hoppy. Keep this brine in same area you will be aging the cheese. Wash lightly all areas of exposed cheese with this brine twice weekly for the first 4-6 weeks. Turn over the cheese each day. If you do not see red color develop after a week or so, add a skewer tip of the PLA yeast to the brine. Continue washing twice a week to hold back any competing mold or Geo. Candidum yeast(white color). This style of cheese can take 6-8 weeks to mature. Don't be afraid of taste testing one of your cheeses or pressing onto the rind to see how soft it has become. This style of cheese will first taste mild, then become stronger over time.

–Enjoy Steve Shapson www.thecheesemaker.com