

# A DIY WHEY COOL GIFT:

## Your own hand-crafted artisan cheese

STORY AND RECIPES BY MARY KARLIN  
PHOTOGRAPHS BY ELIZABETH HOWES



**W**ouldn't it be cool to make your own festive holiday cheeses? Absolutely! But why make your own when there are so many glorious cheeses available for purchase? Well, why *not* make your own?! It's lots of fun!

Making your own cheeses using the extraordinary milks and other ingredients we have available from local sources is, to me, a gesture in celebration of the bounty all around us in our region of Northern California. There's so much to be inspired by. For years I've heard myself say, "I wanna make a cheese like *that!*" So I do, and you can too.

Just imagine the ooohs and ahhs you'll receive when you present a cheese platter including your own beautiful, delicious creations at a celebratory gathering or when you gift a favorite person with a cheese made just for them. The recipients will be very impressed and grateful that you took the time to make such an extraordinary, scrumptious gift and it's a sure thing that requests will abound for you to bring your cheeses to the next gathering and the ones after that.

You may have thought that making cheese with your own hands, in your own kitchen, would be a daunting task, but as I teach in my cheese making classes and in my book, *Artisan Cheese Making at Home* (Ten Speed Press, 2011) and its companion website, [www.artisancheesemakingathome.com](http://www.artisancheesemakingathome.com),

there are many fabulous cheeses you can easily make, while enjoying the process.

You may choose to do your cheese making solo, or with a few friends, or even with your kids or grandkids. Whichever route you choose, you will not only feel gratified by what you've accomplished, you will also have a far greater appreciation for our artisan cheese makers, who craft amazing cheeses for a living.

Let me first demystify the cheese-making process a bit and then guide you to a few of my favorite cheeses that you can make for the holidays or anytime.

How does cheese happen? *Very* simply said, through the process of "acidification" and the application of gentle heat, the protein in milk (casein) forms curds. These curds are drained from the liquid that remains (this is called the "whey") and then "processed" in a variety of ways, depending on the type of cheese you want to make. (Refer to my book if you are interested in further explanation.)

The most important ingredient is the milk. Use the freshest, local pasteurized or pasteurized and homogenized cow's milk or goat's milk available. If you have access to a reliable, safe supply of raw (unpasteurized) milk, by all means use that. If you have sheep's milk available, lucky you! Avoid ultra-pasteurized and ultra-high-temperature treated (labeled "UHT") milks for your cheese making as they will not create the desired curds.

To get started you won't need a lot of specialized equipment. You probably already have much of what you'll need in your cooking arsenal. Here's a short list of the essentials to get started:

- Nonreactive (stainless steel is best) heavy core bottom six-quart stockpot plus lid
- Butter muslin or cheesecloth (two to four yards)
- Flexible wire, long-handled stainless steel whisk
- Food-grade flexible rubber spatula
- Glass measuring cups
- Instant-read thermometer
- Kosher and sea salt
- Metal bowl or plastic bucket as sink to collect whey
- Plastic strainer/colander for draining curds
- Small glass bowls (three or four) for diluting ingredients
- Stainless steel ladle
- Stainless steel measuring spoons
- Stainless steel skimmer or slotted spoon
- Timer
- Wooden spoon for hanging and draining curds

To insure safe results, clean the equipment thoroughly, sanitize and air dry all before you begin. You also need to sanitize any surfaces that may come in contact with the milk or other ingredients. It is important to work in a clean, uncluttered environment. Sorry, no pets allowed in the kitchen while cheese making is in session!

In addition to the equipment above, for the fresh cheeses described below you'll need to stock your cheese-making pantry with a few inexpensive supplies and ingredients: citric acid, liquid rennet, calcium chloride and starter cultures. All of these can be purchased online from a local source, The Beverage People ([www.thebeveragepeople.com](http://www.thebeveragepeople.com)). Other ingredients will be needed as you progress into more complex cheeses.

In the beginning, you'll probably be most successful if you make fresh, easy cheeses that are intended to be served within a few days such as the herb-coated chevre log and/or dried fruit ricotta boulangère described below. After you've tried a simple fresh cheese or two, you might decide to make a slightly more complex cheese such as Pimenton-dusted Ricotta Salata, herb-encrusted Brin d'Amour or wine-soaked Cabra al Vino to be aged briefly then served within a month or so. I suggest that you try both of these cheeses below—perhaps one is to be shared in December and the other in the New Year. I predict that you will be thrilled with the results.

Now, go forth and make cheese!

---

*Mary Karlin is a founding staff member and chef instructor at Ramekins Culinary School in Sonoma, where she has taught wood-fired cooking, cheesemaking and Mediterranean-themed cooking classes for over ten years. Mary has also taught at Rancho La Puerta and the Culinary Institute of America at Greystone. In addition to Artisan Cheese Making at Home (Ten Speed Press, 2011), Mary is the author of Wood-Fired Cooking (Ten Speed Press, 2009).*

---

## Basic Fresh Goat Chevre

Chevre is the common name for spreadable goat cheese. Its log shape is familiar to many of us in the United States and you will often see it with dried herbs or other flavor additives blended into it or as a coating. This version uses a premeasured blend of culture and rennet available through New England Cheese Supply ([www.cheesemaking.com](http://www.cheesemaking.com)), designed for making chevre. This is the perfect and simplest method for any novice cheese maker to venture into making cultured cheese.

Yield: 1½ pounds

### TIME REQUIRED

24+ hours (½ hour to make the cheese + 12 hours ripening + 12 hours to drain)

### INGREDIENTS

1 gallon pasteurized goat's milk, at room temperature for 1 hour  
1 packet mesophilic C20G starter  
½ teaspoon fine sea salt

### TO PREPARE

Heat milk over low flame to 86° F. Sprinkle the starter over the milk and let rehydrate for 5 minutes. Using a whisk and an up-and-down motion, draw the culture into the milk to distribute thoroughly.

Cover and take off heat, maintaining a temperature of no lower than 72°, allowing milk to ripen for 12 hours. (Tip: Either ripen during the day to drain at night or ripen overnight to drain the next morning.)

The curds are ready when they have formed one large mass in the pot. The mass will be the consistency of thick yogurt and the whey will be floating around the sides of the pot. The whey will be very clear.

Place a strainer or colander over a bowl or plastic bucket large enough to capture the whey. Line the strainer with a single layer of dampened butter muslin and gently ladle the curds into it. Gently toss the curds with the salt then cover with the tails of the muslin. Leave to drain at room temperature (72°) for 6–12 hours. The longer the curds drain, the drier the finished cheese will be.

Option: Rather than gravity-draining through cloth in bulk, you can fill two chevre molds, which sit on a draining rack, to drain for the same amount of time. Flip the curds once during the draining process.

Remove the cheese from the cheesecloth and store refrigerated in a covered container for up to 1 week.

### TIPS

After the initial temperature of 86° has been reached, remove pot from burner and put it in some gently warm location—perhaps on a stove burner that's under a stove hood light or, covered, in another warm area—to maintain the desired temperature.

If you want a soft, creamy consistency, drain for 6 or so hours. If you want to create a log of chevre, let the curds drain for up to 12 hours so the cheese can be formed more easily.

### TO SERVE

For a delicious herb-encrusted chevre log, form the drained chevre into two logs, and then roll in your favorite combination of herbs to coat. Herbes de Provence or Fines Herbes are my two favorites. Once thoroughly coated, roll in plastic wrap and refrigerate. Allow a few days for the flavors to come together before serving. Serve at room temperature, accompanied by crackers.



### Dried Fruit Ricotta Boulamour

Ricotta is a simple, fresh cheese that takes little time to make. It is best when used within a few days while its flavor is bright and the texture is still moist and creamy. Traditionally, ricotta is made by reheating whey (ricotta means recooked in Italian) after making other cheeses, though it takes a fair amount of whey to yield a usable amount of ricotta. This home-crafted formula using whole milk and citric acid is very basic. If you want very fluffy curds, add the citric acid AFTER heating the milks to 180°–185°, continuing to raise the temperature to 195°, and add the salt only at step 6. If you like an even richer and creamier ricotta, try making it with heavy cream exclusively. If you don't have citric acid, use lemon juice to coagulate.

Yield: 1 pound (makes 2–3 boulamour, depending upon the size)

**TIME REQUIRED TO FINISH THE BOULAMOUR**  
Plan this one a few weeks ahead of serving for optimum flavor. This colorful, festive “ball of love” is totally encrusted with dried currants and golden raisins that have been macerated in kirsch (cherry liqueur) for at least 2 weeks. One week before serving, make the basic Whole Milk Ricotta recipe below.

#### FOR THE FRUIT COATING

##### INGREDIENTS

1½ cups each dried currants and golden raisins (you can also add cranberries)  
Kirsch (enough to thoroughly cover fruit)

Note: For a nonalcoholic version, plump the fruit in orange juice or alcohol-free sparkling wine.

#### TO PREPARE

Cover the fruit in kirsch or other liquid and allow to macerate, covered, for 2 weeks or so.

#### FOR THE WHOLE-MILK RICOTTA

##### TIME REQUIRED

1½ hours (1 hour to make + 15–20 minutes to drain, or until desired consistency is reached)

##### INGREDIENTS

1 gallon raw or pasteurized whole cow's milk, at room temperature (Alternative: pasteurized goat's milk or raw goat's milk, if you have a reliable source)  
½ cup heavy cream  
1½ teaspoons or more citric acid powder  
1 teaspoon kosher salt

#### TO PREPARE

Combine the room-temperature milk, cream, salt and citric acid; mix thoroughly with a whisk.

Place in the nonreactive pot over medium-low heat; slowly heat the milk to 185°–195° F. This will take about 15–20 minutes. Stir frequently with a flexible rubber spatula to prevent scorching. As the milk reaches around 150°, you will see the curds start to form.

As temperature gets closer to 185°–195° the curds and whey will show a dramatic separation. The whey will be yellowish-green and just slightly cloudy. If the whey is too cloudy, add a pinch more citric acid and gently stir down into the whey to cause more curds to form. Turn off heat.

Gently run a rubber spatula around the edge of the curds to rotate the mass, and then let the curds set without disturbing for 10 minutes.

Line a colander or strainer with water-dampened butter muslin. Carefully ladle the curds

into the colander, being careful not to break up the curds. Use a long-handled mesh skimmer to capture the last of the curds. If any curds are stuck to the bottom of the pan, leave them there. You don't want scorched curds flavoring your cheese.

Drain for 5 minutes then gently toss the curds with 1 teaspoon kosher salt. Be mindful not to break up the curds in the process.

Tie two opposite corners of the butter muslin into a knot and repeat with the other two corners. Slip a dowel or wooden spoon through the knot and then suspend the bag over the whey-catching receptacle.

Drain the curds for 10 minutes or until the desired consistency has been reached. If you want a moist ricotta, stop draining just as the whey has stopped dripping. If you want it drier, or are using it to make ricotta salata, let the curds drain longer.

Transfer the cheese to a lidded container. Cover and store refrigerated overnight. Cheese will keep for up to 10 days. If a richer cheese is desired, before serving stir in ¼ cup heavy cream.

#### TO ASSEMBLE THE BOULAMOUR

Drain the fruits together in a shallow bowl large enough to hold them and a ball of cheese. Tip: Save the delicious macerating liqueur and add a splash or more to a glass of sparkling wine to enjoy with the cheese!

Shape the chilled cheese into 2 or 3 balls and then roll each in the drained mixed fruits to coat. Lightly press the fruit into the cheese to adhere. Note: If you'd like more fruit, finely chop ½ cup more of each of the fruits and mix into the cheese before shaping into balls and rolling in the coating fruits.

Set the fruit-covered balls on a rack to air dry for 2–3 hours (lightly draped with cheesecloth), then wrap each ball in plastic wrap and refrigerate. Allow a few additional days for the flavors to develop.

#### TO SERVE

Remove from the refrigerator 2 hours before serving to allow to come to room temperature. Serve with water crackers and sparkling wine.





Techniques & Recipes for Mastering World-Class Cheeses

ARTISAN  
CHEESE MAKING  
AT HOME



Mary Karlin  
FOREWORD BY PETER REINHART



Cheese lovers rejoice!  
Mary Karlin makes it easy for  
you to create the delicious artisan  
cheeses you love, right in the  
comfort of your own home.



TEN SPEED PRESS  
Berkeley  
www.tenspeed.com

Available everywhere books are sold.

join the inner peace movement



bring this ad in for 2 weeks of unlimited classes for \$30

barworks • sculptworks • danceworks • pilates mat

*pilates reformer classes available at san francisco and walnut creek studios for an additional fee*

1823 divisadero street, san francisco, ca • 650 e. blithedale avenue, mill valley, ca  
2207 larkspur landing circle, larkspur, ca • 1131 locust street, 2nd floor, walnut creek, ca  
new students and local residents only. expires february 29, 2012.

 yogaworks<sup>®</sup>  
FOR EVERYBODY  
yogaworks.com