STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE
CAMEMBERT

- Difficulty level:
- Cow's milk
  (goat's milk or sheep's milk also works)
- 3 hours of preparation
- 10 litres of milk yields 5 cheeses of 250 g

INTRODUCTION

Camembert is relatively easy to make and requires only a few hours of work. Brie and Camembert are in fact almost identical cheeses. The main difference lies in the ageing temperature: Brie is aged at a warmer temperature (12°C). To further differentiate it, you can add 10% cream to the milk when making Brie.

In traditional Camembert de Normandie, the curd—very wet and almost uncut—is ladled into open moulds. Five ladlefuls are required to fill one mould (with 30 minutes between each ladle to allow the curd to settle).

In this recipe, we work a little differently: we cut and stir the curd, allowing some separation between curd grains and whey. This makes it easier to distribute the curd evenly into the moulds.

10 litres of milk yield about five 250 g cheeses, but prepare eight moulds to scoop all the curd. Once the curd settles, you can transfer the excess from the three extra moulds into the main five.

INGREDIENTS

- 10 liters of milk
- Mesophilic starter culture (e.g. buttermilk 2%, propagated mother culture – Dickmilch 1%, Flora Danica, etc.)
- Rind flora: Penicillium candidum or a Camembert culture mix containing P. candidum and Geotrichum (e.g. Sigma 93), plus some supporting yeasts
- Animal or microbial rennet
- Salt

MATERIAL

- Pot of at least 10 liters
- 8 perforated Camembert moulds with bottoms, 11 cm diameter, optionally with draining mat
- (Digital) thermometer
- Curd cutter / curd knife
- Ageing boxes
- Camembert wooden boxes
- White mould cheese paper

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PROCEDURE

- Heat the milk to 20°C
- Add the mesophilic starter and the rind flora (P. candidum or mixed culture). Check the package for dosage
- Continue heating to 32°C
- Add rennet (4 drops per liter of milk)
- Let set for 45 minutes at 32°C – check for a clean break
- Cut the curd coarsely (cubes of approx. 3–4 cm)
- Stir for 3–5 minutes
- Let rest briefly and drain whey down to curd level
- Scoop the curd into the moulds. If needed, do this in stages with 30-minute intervals to allow settling, or fill the extra moulds and later redistribute the curd to end with 5 moulds filled with curds
- After 2 hours, flip the cheese for the first time. Optionally place a small mesh on the bottom to improve drainage
- Repeat flipping every 12 hours
- After about two days, the cheese is firm enough to salt. Sprinkle the top generously with salt (as you would on fries) while still in the mould
- Half a day later, unmould and salt the other side and the edges
- Age at 8–9°C, in a closed ageing box placed on a draining mat (a sushi mat works well). Adjust the lid opening to regulate humidity
- Turn the cheese daily. Dab away any condensation inside the box and lid
- After 5–7 days, the white mould will begin to form
- Once the cheese is fully covered with mould, wrap it in Camembert paper (shiny side out), place it in its wooden box, and move it to the refrigerator (3–5°C)
- After 3 weeks, the cheese is ready to eat. The longer it ages, the stronger and more complex the flavour becomes..




TIPS

- For a creamier cheese, cut and stir the curd less
- Larger cheeses (Brie-size) can stay longer in the mould
- You can also spray the rind culture (dissolved in water + 0.3% salt) instead of adding it to the milk
- You can make ricotta from the whey, though the yield is considerably lower
- A piece of rind from a very fresh Brie or Camembert can replace a commercial mould culture (blend it into some milk and add to your batch)

ADDITIONAL NOTES

White-mould cheeses are extra sensitive to contamination. Make sure your hands are extremely clean during handling—especially before the rind flora has developed. After washing with soap, you may spray a bit of alcohol on your hands. The same applies to the ageing box and all equipment.

Ageing the cheese wrapped in white-mould paper, tightly enclosed in a box, has an important purpose: it limits oxygen supply. Mould needs oxygen—less oxygen means slower rind growth. This results in a thinner rind and slower but more consistent ripening.
Lower temperatures also help. In small-scale production, the rind flora is often overdosed, which risks overly rapid protein and fat break-down under the rind, causing a "slipping skin" or rind detachment