Pastoralist Camel Cheese Production

10 litre cheese production kit

2 cooking pots (one for boiling water and one for the cheese production), 1 plastic basin with fitting colander for draining cheese curds, 2 fine netted cloths for draining cheese curds, 1 fine netted sieve, 1 long knife, 1 wooden spoon for stirring, 1 milk can, 2 plastic trays for drying cheese, FAR-M Rennet sticks, Dish soap, chlorine for water treatment and supabrite or other scrubbing material.

1 Wash hands with soap and clean water.

2 Put cooking pot with clean water on fire to start boiling.

3 Sterilise the whole cheese making kit in hot boiling water, including spoons, knives, cloths, sieves, etc. Put upside down on clean table or rack to dry away from dust.

4 Measure and sieve the cheese milk through fine netted cloth into your milk jug. A boiled pillow case will work very well. if milk is sourced from different people – a simple record is useful.

5 Immerse WAPI (green) completely inside the milk, tie its string onto the can to secure it in place and stir occasionally. Check WAPI frequently till you see the beginning of the green wax melting (the milk will have reached 65°C).

6 Place the jug with sieved milk and the WAPI in the hot water. Ten to twenty litres will take 10–20 minutes to heat so do not walk away. Over-heated milk will not coagulate.

7 Remove milk jug and cooking pot wih hot water and leave for 20 minutes in a warm place.

8 Remove milk jug from the hot water and place in a cold water bath. The cold water bath warms quickly and may need to be replaced till jug reaches 45°C (hot to the touch but no burning sensation).

9 Pour pasteurised milk into sterilised cheese pot.

10 Add 100–150 ml (1/2 cup) culture for every 10 litres of milk. Stir well and cover. Leave in warm place for 1 hour.

11 Measure rennet. 1 rennet stick will coagulate 100 litres of camel milk, so to make cheese from 10 litres, this needs to be divided 10 times. For 20 litres, divide into 5 parts. The easiest way is to draw a box on a lineated piece of paper covering 10 lines and arrange the rennet inside the box. Then cut off one square for every 10 litres with a dry knife. Dissolve the measured rennet in a small amount of clean (boiled and cooled) water and add to cheese milk. Stir well and cover.

12 In hot areas, the cheese milk will start coagulating in 40–90 minutes. Check readiness for cutting – where your knife can lift a section of curd aside.

13 When ready – cut cheese milk into a pattern of squares – first one way then cross-wise, and lastly sideways as far as possible and cover. This will help speed up the separation of cheese curds and whey. Waiting time according to recipe.

14 Drain whey off the top of curds.

15 Place colander on top of basin, spread boiled cloth on colander and gently transfer cheese curds for draining. Cover curds.

16 Cheese curds can either be drained together if meant for drying and home use, or in forms if sold to hotels, etc. If drained in forms, turn cheese every two hours. Remove from form when all the whey has stopped draining out.

17 When drained to desired consistency, set out for drying. Sweetened cheese can be rolled in sugar, and cheese for other uses should be slightly salted to prevent moulding.

18 Completely drained cheese curds can be cut in squares and dried with or without sugar.

19 Wash all utensils:

(a) First rinse cloths and utensils with cold water to remove any milk or cheese left over.
(b) Wash all cloths and utensils with warm water and dish soap or bar soap.
(c) Rinse in cold clean water.
(d) If hot water is available, sterilise all.
(e) Dry cloths and utensils on a clean table or rack and store under cover away from dust.

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