



CHEESEMAKING
gourmet cheese simply & easily

INSTRUCTIONS

CHEESE WAXING



Cheese Waxing Instructions

<https://cheesemaking.com.au/how-to-wax-your-cheese/>

These instructions have been prepared to assist you in applying wax to the surface of your cheese.

Wax is one of several methods to apply a protective barrier to the outside of the cheese. The wax barrier will protect the cheese physically against minor bumps, stop microbes growing on the cheese surface, especially mould and help stop the cheese from drying out. All of this while the cheese matures. This wax is food grade microcrystalline wax. It is quite a firm wax that has a very good potential to absorb bumps that might crack other waxes. It is the same wax used by many commercial cheese manufacturers.

To apply the wax you will require:

- ♦ a very basic stainless steel pot/container with a lid to hold and store the wax
- ♦ pastry brush or similar (optional)
- ♦ stirrer (e.g. old cutlery or old wooden spoon)
- ♦ wax
- ♦ thermometer

Find a basic stainless pot + lid (a dollar store type) as you will not be able to use it for any other purpose once you start using it for wax. For 1kg wax, a container approximately 15cm wide will be enough. If the container is too wide you won't have the depth of wax to cover the cheese. If the pot is too narrow you will not be able to fit the cheese into the container. The wax stays in this pot all its life. Keep adding new wax to this pot when it requires a top up.

Place all or part of the wax into the pot and place the pot into a larger pot that contains water. So, a double boiler situation. The water needs to be about the same level as the wax. Heat the double boiler on the lowest setting until all the wax melts. Do not place the wax pot directly on the stove, it has a flashpoint and may catch fire. Don't try to rush the melting; it usually takes about 20 - 30 minutes to melt depending on the quantity of wax fully. A temperature of 80°C - 90°C is ideal for the wax to melt. Give the wax an occasional stir to get more even melting.

If you are adding colour, place the clear wax into the pot and heat the wax using the double boiler to 80°C –90°C or until all of the wax is fully melted. Then add ½ of the given colour and stir in very well, using a few good stirs over a few minutes. You can add more of the colouring for a deeper colour. Cool the coloured wax down to 65°C (+/-5°C) to start waxing the cheese.



A handy option: If you have been provided clear wax with colour bottles, try waxing your cheese using just the 'clear wax'. It's not a bad alternative to coloured wax. If you don't like the clear add the colour for the next cheese.

The cheese to be waxed needs to be prepared carefully. Just-made cheese needs to be stored in the fridge or its ripening room for several days to allow the excess moisture to migrate to the surface and dry out. If the cheese is stored in the fridge you should leave the cheese out of the fridge for 10 minutes to allow any condensation that builds up to disappear. Any moisture on the surface of the cheese needs to be avoided as the wax will not stick to the surface where there is moisture. However, on a hot day, the cheese should not stay out of the fridge for too long as high temperatures on these days will 'melt' the surface of the cheese and create an oily surface. The wax will not stick to an oily surface. So, on hot days the ideal place to hold the cheese is in a cool or tempered room or esky.

Remove any loose cheese and use a spatula or knife to pat close any open or cracked areas on the surface of the cheese. If there is mould on the cheese this can be removed by washing it with a 20% salt or a mild vinegar solution.

Heat the wax up to around 80°C - 90°C, and at that point, turn off the stovetop but leave the wax in the double boiler to retain the heat with a lid on. Once the wax has been heated stir occasionally and allow it to cool to around 65°C (+/- 5°C).

There are two ways to apply the wax:

With a dedicated pastry brush

Use the brush as you would use a paintbrush. Brush the wax onto the cheese and turn the cheese as you go. This method may leave brush marks on the cheese.

Dipping the cheese into the hot wax

Pick up the cheese, making sure your hands are clean and dry, and dip it into the hot wax so that slightly more than half of the cheese is in the wax. Then hold it there for 4 - 5 seconds maximum. Move the cheese back and forth very slowly during this time to help force any air bubbles from the surface of the cheese. Do not exceed 4 or 5 seconds or the cheese will melt. After 4 - 5 seconds is up, lift the cheese up and hold it a few centimetres above the wax for about 10 seconds so the residual wax drips back into the wax pot.

Place the cheese on the bench, wax side up, for five minutes for the wax to cool then repeat the process for the other 'half' of the cheese. If you pick up the cheese while the wax is still warm, there may be partly melted cheese under the wax that will separate from the wax and cause the cheese will slip out of the wax coating. Make sure that when waxing the 2nd half of the cheese, you slightly overlap the 1st dipping, so no cheese is exposed.

Use a thin piece of timber or cutlery to stir the wax (I use a wooden spoon) at the time of waxing to ensure it is an even consistency and temperature. Use a thermometer to measure the temperature of the wax.

Finishing touches

Once the waxing has been completed, closely inspect the cheese to make sure there are no pinholes in the wax or there are any unwaxed sections of the cheese. A pastry brush can be used to patch up any small holes (as small as pinholes) or gaps that might appear on the cheese after it is waxed.

Finished waxing

When the waxing is complete, remove the pot from the stove, replace the lid, allow it to cool and store until required again. The wax does not have a use-by date. If you used an instrument, it may be easiest to allow the wax to remain on the brush and stirrer, and when they cool wrap in glad wrap and with the cooled wax until the next time waxing is required.

A few tips

- ◆ If the wax is too hot the layer of wax will be very thin and the cheese under the wax will melt
- ◆ If the wax is too cold, you get a thick and uneven layer of wax on the cheese
- ◆ Some people prefer to 'double dip', meaning they apply two coats of wax.
- ◆ When you have finished with the thermometer, dip the probe into the hot wax to remove any solidified wax, then remove from the wax straight away; while the wax is warm, wipe off any wax. Then pour hot water from the kettle to remove any residual wax and give a final wipe clean.

Dangerous, be careful!

1. Wax is flammable and should not be placed directly into a pot on the stove. Always use a double boiler.
2. Do not heat the melted wax above 90°C
3. When the wax melts, it is hot, and it can burn your skin. Always use implements to wax the cheese.

Happy cheese waxing!

Graham