



CHEESEMAKING
gourmet cheese simply & easily

INSTRUCTIONS

HOW TO STRING YOUR CURD CUTTERS

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Contents

- ◆ 1 x frame with welded horizontal support and holes spaced at 5mm around the frame and the support
- ◆ 5 metres of 20lb to 50lb breaking strain fishing line (currently using Jarvis Walker Hercules Mono 50lb, yellow)

Instructions on how to thread the fishing line through the metal frames.

Background

In general terms, the cut size of the curd is determined by the degree of moisture that is required to remain in the curd. Hard cheeses are cut small, semi hard slightly larger cuts, and soft cheeses have the largest cuts. The larger the cut, the smaller the surface area of the curd, and the smaller the loss of moisture from the curd. By using a curd knife, you should see a big difference in your cutting consistency ie the curds being cut to the same size, especially if you are used to cutting curd with a spatula or a kitchen blade. See the image below.



This curd cutting knife is the same style as used in commercial cheese factories, just a lot smaller and lighter. It can be used for cutting any curds for any sort of cheese. A cheese factory will have a set of knives for each curd size they want to cut. You will have to do the same. So you will have to

work out which knife or set of knives best suits your required cut size. The curd cutter is designed to cut curd at 5mm, 10mm, 15mm, 20mm, 25mm, 30mm and more cubes. The cut smaller than 5mm, eg rice grain size, you use the 5mm cut but you very rapidly pass the curd knife back and forth until the desired cut size is achieved.

Curd knife options

Some cheesemakers require a curd knife with a maximum height of up to 17cm eg if your vat milk level is less than 17cm tall. In this case, one curd knife can be strung for both horizontal (cross cuts) and vertical cuts. The curd knife is threaded fully up to the halfway point (the support bar). It is basically 'two' cutters in one knife. See the image below.



Some cheesemakers require a curd knife with a height taller than 17cm (note the maximum height for this knife is 34cm), e.g., if your vat milk level is more than 17cm tall but less than 34mm tall. In this case, two curd knives are required, with one curd knife strung horizontally and the other curd knife strung vertically. See the two images below.





Stringing the curd knife

It is important to keep in mind that cheese curd, even a cheese curd with a very firm set, is still quite soft and fragile, so the fishing line does not have to be very tight to be able to cut the curd. Resist the need to keep pulling the fishing line tighter and tighter. The stainless steel frames are quite rigid but quite thin. They are made thin so they do not unnecessarily break or crush the curd while it is being cut. The curd knife frame will bend inwards if the fishing line is pulled too tight. If you see the curd knife frame bending you are pulling too tight on the fishing line.

If you require the curd knife to cut the curd at 5mm thread each hole along the frame. If you want to cut at 10mm thread every 2nd hole, and for 15 mm every 3rd hole and so forth.

There are no rules for threading these frames, do it the best way that works for you. It's a bit like threading shoelaces on a very long shoe. But here are some suggestions on what works for me.

Threading the vertical section

Start by threading the vertical frame. Tie a knot at one end as your 'starting' or 'anchor' knot. Then start weaving the line through the required 5 or 10 or 15mm holes. Just take up some of the line slack, but don't try to pull the line too tight at this point. Keep threading all the way up and down until you reach the endpoint. Hold the untied end and keep tightening the slack row by row by giving a slight tug in the fishing line (that's when you don't want to overtighten) then tie it off. Then do the same for the remaining vertical frame. **You will notice that if you press or pull on the strung fishing line it still has some give. That's normal, it's only cutting cheese curd.**

Then thread the horizontal frame in the same way.

Cut off all of the loose ends about 1cm from the knot. You are now ready to cut. Threading gets easier the more you do it.

It may take 10 or 15 minutes to get a curd knife threaded. It is probably not ideal to keep cutting and replacing the finishing line each time you make cheese with a different cut size. Provide you don't 'snag' the line while storing the curd knife, the fishing line can stay strung for the life of the knife.

Cutting with the curd cutter for a square or rectangular vat

1st cut

Place the curd cutter on the top of the curd at one end of the cheese vat. Lean the cutter forward at about a 20 or 30 degrees incline, then push the curd cutter to the base of the cheese vat. When the cutter reaches the base of the vat, straighten up the cutter. Then drag it very quickly and deliberately through the curd. At the end of the cut, lean the cutter forward 20 or 30 degrees as you take it out and push any loose curd back into the cheese vat. Repeat this cut until all of the curd has been cut. You now have 'flat sheets' of curd. That horizontal cutter is not required for any more cheese cuts.

2nd cut

Use the vertical cutter to cut in exactly the same way, and follow the same direction as the horizontal cuts. But as you are using a vertically strung knife and you are now cutting the You now have 'flat sheets' of curd into 'strips' in the curds. Your second cut is complete.

3rd cut

The aim is to make the 'strips' into 'cubes'. Use the vertical cutter to cut across 2nd cut. With the same vertical cutter use the same technique to cut across the cheese vat.

Cutting with the curd cutter for a circular cheese vat

1st cut

Use the horizontal knife. Place the curd cutter on the top of the curd as if it were a spoke in a wheel. lean the cutter forward 20 or 30 degrees. Insert the curd knife into the curd and straighten it to an upright position. With one of the uprights in the exact centre and on the base of the pot, pivot that upright on that spot and turn the curd knife in a circular motions. It may be easier to cut 25% at a time. Re-grip the curd knife, cut another 25%, and repeat until you have cut in a full circle. At the end of the cut, lean the cutter forward 20 or 30 degrees as you take it out and push any loose curd back into the cheese vat. You now have flat planes of curd. The horizontal cutter is not required for any more cheese cuts.

2nd cut

Use the vertical cutter to cut in exactly the same way as the 1st cut. Follow the same direction as the 1st cut. But as you are using a vertically strung knife and you are now making 'cubes' as you move the curd knife through the curd. There is no 3rd cut for circular cheese vats

Cutting with Washing the curd knife

You should wash the curd knife soon after cutting. The key parts to wash are the knots you made when you tied off the fishing line and the small holes in the side of the curd knife. While the curd is

soft, it is easily removed. Pour some hot water from the kettle over the knife, and allow to drip dry.

Happy curd cutting!

Graham