

I have been canning peaches today and while I worked, I was thinking about something entirely different—cheese. Now, those two foods don't seem, on the surface, to have anything to do with each other, but one activity did lead to the thoughts skittering around in my mind focusing on the other. Working at a task that requires a certain amount of manual labor but little thought invariably leads to consideration of some entirely different topics. So it was today with peaches and cheese.

The first nine jars of peaches are in the canner now, and the timer is working, so I can let my musings drift entirely to cheese.

Someone may ask, "Why don't you make cheese?" This query often comes after viewing our three pigs that are surely "well fed" and perhaps even overfed.

Well, we do, a couple of kinds anyway. Or three when I think about it. I make a lot of feta cheese, or what passes for feta in a cows' milk cheese that has a similar flavor. The taste of the feta is enhanced, most believe, by what I do with it afterwards.

When it has been in its salty ripening for a couple of days, I get out wide mouth mason jars, garlic, dill, lemon or lime juice, and olive oil. A little chopped garlic in the bottom of each jar accompanied by the same of fresh dill is followed by a splash of acid—lemon or lime—and, finally, a slug of good organic olive oil. I stir that up, pressing the herbs with my spoon. Then, I cube the feta cheese and fill the jar, turn it over a couple of times to mix, and store it in the refrigerator or, for longer storage, in the freezer.

Most of the volume of milk that I use for a batch of feta cheese remains in the kettle. The nearly clear whey that has separated from the cheese curds has several possible uses. The easiest way to utilize this part of the milk is to feed it to the pigs or the chickens. That often happens.

But, when the round, thick, rather caramel-like bowl of *mysost* or *mesost*, depending on whether a Norwegian or a Swede is about to eat it, is nearly empty, it is time to make another batch. And it is pure whey. It can be stretched and enriched with cream, but all alone, fresh whey left after the curds of feta have been removed from the kettle makes a flavorful cheese.

The other cheese that I make sometimes is a favorite that my mother often made. Skim milk fresh from milking is left to acidify—though I help it along with a little biological starter—for about twenty-four hours. A nice, smooth, curd has usually formed by then. I heat that curd, cut it into small pieces, and soon have a mass of cottage cheese that is so unlike the commercial product that it is hardly possible to believe it has the same name. Salt and a good sprinkling of black pepper and this homemade cottage cheese is a welcome addition to our meals.

But, we have always wanted to make hard, pressed cheese—and, we have tried a few times—but this is skilled labor that we aren't competent enough to master. Maybe, with a lot of practice and some luck, we will yet make slicing cheese from our own cows' milk. If we ever succeed, we will surely let everyone know. But, don't expect the announcement any time soon.