

This is a Three Cheese Day, and that is hard on the kitchen equipment. Each of these three cheeses would be easiest to handle in one particular kettle. But, for one reason or another, it was convenient to make all of these varieties on the same day.

The cottage cheese started yesterday, and so, it was the winner of the handiest and largest kettle. To start this cheese, I brought the morning's skim milk home from the milkhouse. I added a little powdered cheese culture to the warm milk, stirred it in, and set the covered kettle on the cold cookstove. It isn't usually necessary to add culture to make cottage cheese, but we get a more reliable quality with this addition.

Today, when I checked that kettle, the skim milk had solidified into a solid curd with a little whey floating on the top and around the edges. Later today, I will slice that curd up and down into slices and then cubes, and then gently heat the mass with a stir once in a while. In time, the curds will separate from the whey and I will drain the cheese, squeeze out as much whey as possible, and pile the curds in a bowl and refrigerate. That's all there is to that except for the addition of a little salt when we eat it.

The second cheese is similar to feta, but it is made with milk from the cows, not the sheep. I use whole milk for this cheese, and I bring it in warm from the cow. I add a culture to this, too, and also stir in an enzyme that will help it develop a stronger taste. I can leave this milk in the stainless steel pail it came home with me in, so I don't really need the big kettle. After an hour or so, I add rennet to the cultured milk, and leave it to coagulate. When that happens after about three quarters of an hour, I cut that curd in a similar way to the cottage cheese, and after gently stirring for a half hour or so, I pour the curds into a cheesecloth lined colander and hang the bag in the basement to drain overnight in a cool environment. If I had the big kettle available, I would drain the cheese over that, as there is a large colander that fits the kettle. But, the cottage cheese is in the kettle, so I "make do."

The third cheese is possible as a result of the feta cheese process. Where there are curds, there is whey. And the whey—the watery part of the milk that is left after cheese coagulation—can also be used to make a special and very distinct cheese. This is mysost or brunost, the whey cheese of Scandinavia. It is simply whey simmered and simmered until it forms a soft, brown paste. It can be used as a soft cheese spread or cooked until it is thick

enough to slice when cold. This cheese has a caramelized flavor that is not pleasing to some people. It can be made richer by adding cream to the mixture during the last part of the cooking. I would like to have the big kettle for this cheese, as there is a lot of cooking time involved and a large volume of liquid, but it is simmering away nicely in a “second best” vessel.

So, by the end of the day, there should be three cheeses available for our future meals. I just wish we had the expertise to make good hard, aged cheese, but so far, every attempt has been a failure. But, we will probably try again.