

Roquefort

Characteristics:

Roquefort, a blue-veined, semisoft to hard cheese, is named for the village of Roquefort in the Department of Aveyron in southeastern France, where its manufacture has been an important industry for more than two centuries. At one time shepherds prepared the curd, but now the milk is collected and the curd is prepared in centralized dairies.

A French regulation limits use of the word "Roquefort" to cheese made in the Roquefort area from ewe's milk. Other French cheese of the Roquefort type is called Bleu cheese, and Roquefort-type cheese made in other countries is known as Blue cheese. In addition, there are the distinctive blue-veined cheeses of England (Stilton) and Italy (Gorgonzola).

Roquefort cheese is characterized by its sharp, peppery, piquant flavor, and by the mottled, blue-green veins throughout the curd and the whiteness of the curd between the veins. Powder containing spores of *Penicillium roqueforti* mold is added to the curd as it is being put into the hoops, and the veins result from growth of the mold during the curing period. The powder is prepared by inocculating loaves of fresh bread with a pure culture of mold; when the mold has permeated the bread (in 4 to 6 weeks) the interior is crumbled, dried, ground, sifted, and stored for use in the cheese.

The Method of Making:

Ewe's whole milk is set with rennet at a temperature between 24-28°C 76-82°F. It is customary to heat fresh milk to between 50-60°C 122 -140°F and then to add enough cold milk to adjust the mixture to the setting temperature.



After a coagulation period of 1 1/2 - 2 hours, the curd is cut, the free whey is removed, and the curd either is transferred onto a cloth to drain or is mixed and drained in the vat.



Then it is transferred to perforated metal hoops, about 18 cm 7 1/2 inches in diameter and 15 cm 6 inches deep, which rest on drain mats on drain boards. The curd is put into the hoops in 3 or 4 layers, and blue-mold powder is sprinkled between each layer.



The curd is not pressed, but the hoops are turned several times the first day, and two or three times daily for the next 4 or 5 days. Then the cheeses are removed from the hoops, and they are taken to the caves for salting and curing. There are many natural caves in the Roquefort area and additional excavations have been made. The caves are a network of caverns and grottoes connected with one another and with the outside surface by numerous channels through which a brisk movement of cool, moist air keeps the temperature at not more than 10°C 50°F. (often as low as 4°C 40°F.) and the relative humidity at about 95% throughout the year, thus providing natural conditions that are favorable to mold growth and ripening of Roquefort cheese.



The cheeses are dry salted, piled in two or three layers for 3 days, then salted again and piled in layers for another 3 or 4 days - making a total salting period of a week. Besides improving the flavor, the rather heavy salting retards growth of slime-forming micro-organisms and foreign molds and is one of the factors that control normal ripening. When salting is completed, each cheese is punched with 60 or more holes, which permit air to reach the interior of the cheese so that the blue mold can grow.



The cheeses are then placed on edge on racks, and they are cleaned



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every 2 or 3 weeks by scraping and brushing.



The curing period is 2 to 5 months, depending on the extent of ripening desired. When ripened sufficiently, the cheeses are cleaned, wrapped in tinfoil, and boxed. They may be stored at a temperature of 4°C 40°F.



The yield of cured cheese is said to be nearly 20% of the weight of milk used.



Analysis:

Composition:	%
Moisture	38,5-41 (not more than 45)
Fat	32,2
Fat in the solids	not less than 50
Protein	21,1
Ash	6,1
Salt(in ash)	4,1