

MELTY MOZZARELLA

INGREDIENTS:

- 1½ teaspoons citric acid
- ½ cup plus ¼ cup dechlorinated water
- ¼ tablet vegetarian rennet
- 1 gallon whole cow's milk (Not ultra-pasteurized)
- 1 cup cream (optional)
- 2 teaspoons flake salt

SUPPLIES:

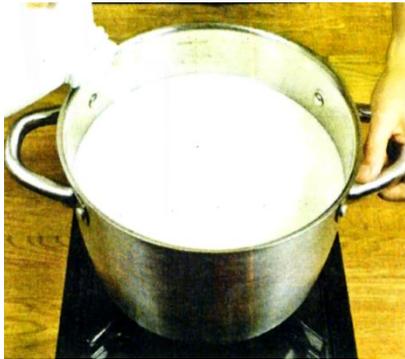
- 1 teaspoon
- ½ teaspoon
- ½ cup
- ¼ cup
- 5-quart stockpot
- Large slotted spoon
- Cooking thermometer
- Large microwave-safe casserole dish or bowl
- Plastic gloves (optional)
- Parchment or waxed paper (optional)
- Large bowl for ice bath (optional)



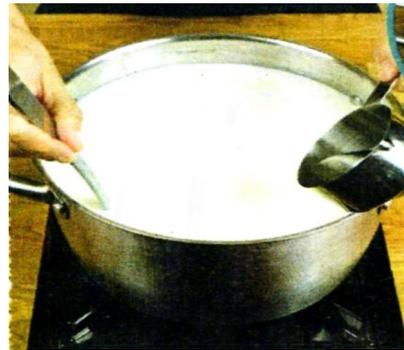
1. Stir the citric acid into the $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water and set aside.



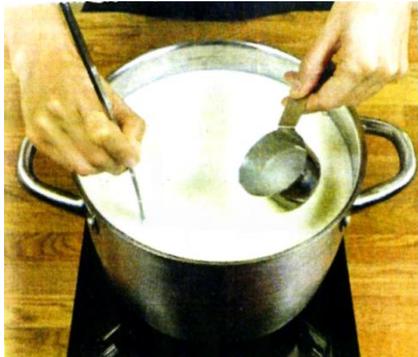
2. Dissolve the $\frac{1}{4}$ tablet of rennet in the $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of water and set it aside.



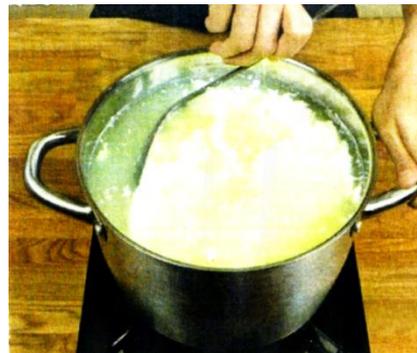
3. Pour the milk into the pot. Optional: Add the cup of cream to make a more succulent cheese, closer to fresh mozzarella di bufala!



4. Stir in the well-dissolved citric acid solution and heat on medium to 90°F.



5. When the milk temperature reaches 90°F, add the rennet solution and mix it in with 20 quick strokes to make sure it is incorporated evenly. Then, without stirring, continue heating.



6. Heat to 105°F if you plan on using the microwave method to stretch the cheese (for stretching in a hot whey bath, heat to 110°F). Coagulation will start to happen, look for separation between curds and whey, clumps, or a yogurt-like texture.



7. Use the spoon to slice large clumps of curd to just 1 to 2 inches in size. Slowly remove the pieces around in the warm whey for 1 minute to help them shrink as they cook. Lower the heat to hold the temperature of the milk as soon as it reaches 105°F/110°F.



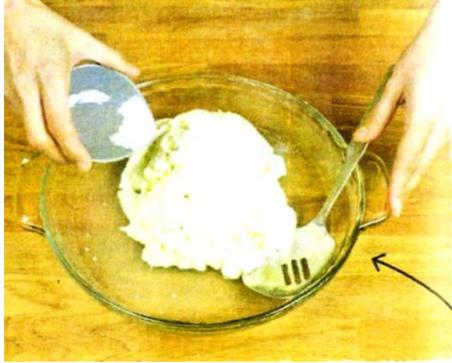
8. When the texture of the curds has changed from that of soft yogurt to that of a scrambled egg (about 2 additional minutes of cooking and gentle stirring), scoop the curds into the microwave-safe bowl.



9. Drain off any visible whey into the pot as you hold the curds with your hands or a spoon. Flatten the curds across the bowl for more even heating.



10. Microwave the curds for 1 minute on high (the default quick-heat settings usually do the trick). Using the spoon or your hand, fold the curd mass over itself 5 times, to distribute the heat evenly. Drain off any whey that is released.



11. Microwave again for 30 seconds on high. Drain the whey immediately. Sprinkle salt on the curds and fold and flatten them 10 times to incorporate the salt evenly. (Note: if it's too hot on your hands, use a spoon or wear clean plastic gloves.)



12. Microwave for another 30 seconds on high. There should be very little whey now. Fold the curds over themselves repeatedly, pressing down between folds. The curds normally transform most dramatically into cheese after this heating.



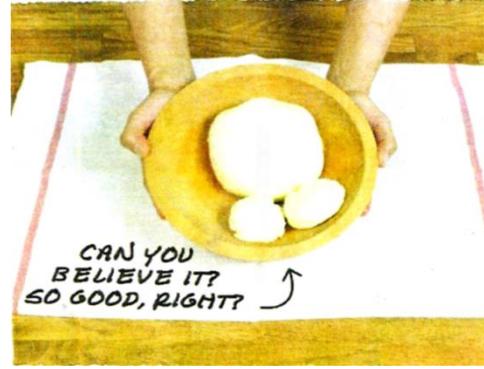
13. The curd temperature should be 135°F, though you don't want to stop to check, since the curds will cool in the time it takes to do so. The curds may come together to form one large mass in as few as 5 folds or as many as 30.



14. During the folding process, the curds will start out looking a little like lumpy cookie batter, then will suddenly become springy and stretchy like perfect bread dough. Test it by stretching the curd a little every few folds.



15. The curd becomes mozzarella when the edges look smooth and the surface looks shiny when stretched. This is when you can form it into smooth balls, ropes, or other shapes.



16. If you like the result now, you are done. If the curd tears or shreds into strings, it cooled too much for additional stretching. Heat it in the microwave for another 30 seconds. (Note: The less you heat and stretch your mozzarella, the more tender it will be.)

VARIATIONS & SUBSTITUTIONS

- Try low-fat cow's milk – the sturdy result will be easier to shred – or try raw goat's milk for a tangy flavor (pasteurized goat's milk curd is not very sturdy). Beware, however, the texture will not be as creamy, and the yield will decrease a bit with these alternate milks.
- Add herbs, cracked Black pepper, Chili pepper flakes, and anything from bacon crumbles to dried fruit bits when you add and fold the salt into the curd.

SHAPING PULLED CURD

You can cut cubes of mozzarella and toss them in vinaigrette for a delicious marinated appetizer, but this method is worth it if you want to make legit-looking, marinated bocconcini (Italian for “little mouthfuls”) for a party, or to give as a gift. Finish the look by marinating in a pretty jar.



SUPPLIES:

Pulled cheese curd from Melty Mozzarella

Parchment or waxed paper (slightly wider than the length of the pulled curd)

Cotton twine (twice as long as the pulled curd)



1. Prepare a pulled rope of Melty Mozzarella, much like you do to make Pizza Filata.



2. Centre the rope horizontally across the parchment (about 2 – 3 inches on each side, and roll the mozzarella tightly. Twist and pinch the ends closed.



3. Tie one end of the roll with one end of twine, keeping a long length of twine to work with.



4. Wrap the long end of twine around the roll, about 1½ inches from the end.



5. Thread the twine end under the loop you just made to complete a simple knot.



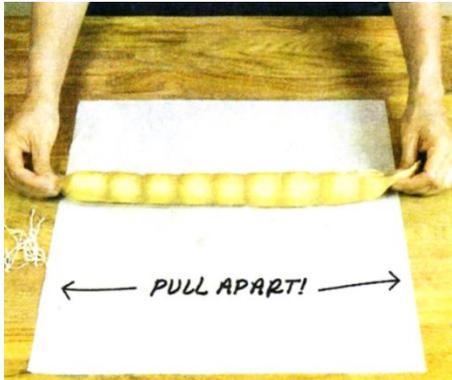
6. Pull tightly on both ends of the knot, Nearly pinching off your first little bite. Repeat the loop-and-knot sequence, about 1½ inches from the previous loop and knot.



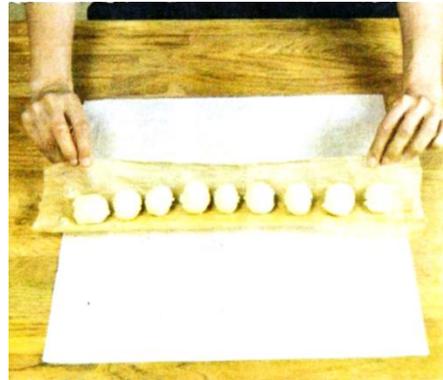
7. Continue the knotting, trying your best to maintain even spacing that will result in consistent size bites.



8. Tie and tighten the last knot and briefly admire your handwork before disassembly.



9. Snip of the twine and pull the ends of the parchment in opposite directions.



10. Unroll the parchment, and the resulting bocconcini is ready to toss with vinaigrette, herbs, garlic, and so on, or serve as is. (Note: For a cool party trick, tie up the rope in advance but wait to unwrap the bites in front of your guests.)