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HOMEMADE CHEESE FOR ALL

We tested do-it-yourself kits for mozzarella, ricotta, and chèvre, and found something for every level

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Making your own fresh cheese may sound like a daunting task, but with do-it-yourself kits available for various styles, it's easy. You—yes, you!—will whip up some of the freshest ricotta, mozzarella, or chèvre you've ever tasted. Our intrepid interns (i.e., cheesemaking newbies) tested six kits—three for making mozzarella and ricotta, and three for chèvre—and took plenty of notes on what matters most to amateurs: ease of use, time spent on each recipe, and results. We also identified the type of person best suited for each kit, in case you're purchasing one as a gift. If our successes are any indication, you'll soon wonder why you haven't been crafting your own (fresh) curds all along.



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Mozzarella + Ricotta

Because making fresh cheese doesn't require many supplies, some companies produce two-in-one kits. Each of these three kits makes several batches of both mozzarella and ricotta.

1 Cultures for Health Mozzarella and Ricotta Cheese Making Kit

You don't have to be an expert chef to perfect fresh cheese with this kit from South Dakota's Cultures for Health—and with enough supplies for 10 servings of ricotta and 20 servings of mozzarella, you'll certainly get your fill. The ricotta came out beautifully on our first try, thanks to clear, detailed instructions, which include diagrams and pictures. Kids will get a kick out of stretching and kneading the mozzarella.

TIME IT TOOK US: 1 to 1½ hours for ricotta; 1½ hours for mozzarella

BEST FOR: Babysitting bon vivants

FIND IT AT: culturesforhealth.com; \$24.95

2 The Big Cheese Making Kit Mozzarella & Ricotta Kit

This British kit boasts easy-to-follow directions, complete with photos. Metric measurements require US conversions (we've been told that an American version, which will also advise against using ultrapasteurized milk, is on its way later this year). The mozzarella recipe incorporates a microwave to speed up cheesemaking. Rubber gloves are recommended for stretching hot curds—a worthy investment, considering that there's enough citric acid, salt, vegetarian rennet, and butter muslin here to make 10 batches of cheese.

TIME IT TOOK US: 1½ hours for ricotta; 1½ hours for mozzarella

BEST FOR: Confident cooks who seek shortcuts

FIND IT AT: bigcheesemakingkit.com; £22.50

3 New England Cheese Co. 30 Minute Mozzarella & Ricotta Kit

This bright, whimsically packaged kit contains everything you need to make 30 servings of ricotta and mozzarella, including a thermometer, cheesecloth, and vegetable rennet. Ricotta is generally a simpler cheese to make than mozzarella, and that held true for this kit; our testers found it trickier to make mozzarella (the minimal instructions assume some understanding of the cheesemaking process).

TIME IT TOOK US: 45 minutes to 1 hour for ricotta; 45 minutes for mozzarella

BEST FOR: Budding curd nerds with basic cheesemaking knowledge

FIND IT AT: cheesemaking.com; \$24.95



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GIVEAWAY
Visit facebook.com/culturecheesemag to enter a special giveaway to receive one of five mozzarella-making kits from The Cheesemaker.

Chèvre

Making your own cheese is sure to impress, but making your own goat cheese? That amps up the wow factor. It may take extra work to source goat's milk in your area, but the results are well worth the effort.

4 Standing Stone Farms Basic Cheese Making Kit

This comprehensive beginner's guide from Tennessee's Standing Stone Farms features recipes for mozzarella, burrata, queso blanco, and ricotta in addition to chèvre. It includes easy-to-follow directions and enough supplies to transform 30 gallons of milk into tangy goat cheese. Requiring only 20 minutes of hands-on time, steps are simple for people patient enough to leave curds untouched for 12 to 18 hours while they separate from whey. The payoff: some of the creamiest French-style goat cheese you've ever eaten.

TIME IT TOOK US: 16 to 24 hours

BEST FOR: Patient purists

FIND IT AT: standingstonefarms.com; \$35

5 The Beverage People Quickstart Chèvre Cheesemaking Kit

Though this California-made kit requires a large window of time—nearly 48 hours when all prep and draining is said and done—only 30 minutes of those hours are active. Simple directions and supplies, including molds and herb packets, let beginners shape and flavor the cheese to their liking. It's a great option for those looking for a low-effort way to make their friends' jaws drop.

TIME IT TOOK US: 48 hours

BEST FOR: Creative hosts aiming to impress a crowd

FIND IT AT: thebeveragepeople.com; \$34.99



6 Urban Cheesecraft Chèvre DIY Cheese Kit

The fastest goat cheese-making kit in the group (clocking in at about 1 hour, including drain time), Urban Cheesecraft's chèvre kit comes with customizable recipes, making it ideal for both beginners and experienced cheesemakers, as well as children with adult supervision. Inside the Portland, Ore.-produced kit are enough supplies to make 10 batches of light and mild cheese.

TIME IT TOOK US: 1 hour

BEST FOR: Time-crunched recipe renegades

FIND IT AT: urbancheesecraft.com; \$29



Want More?

With so many kits to choose from, we tried to represent a diverse geographical spread (and to reserve some of the more advanced types for a 2015 feature!). In the meantime, here are a few more kit producers we recommend:

THE CHEESEMAKER: Kits for everything from basic mozzarella to kefir and Camembert, shipped from Wisconsin. thecheesemaker.com

ROARING BROOK DAIRY: Make mozzarella, chèvre, butter, and tofu with the cute kits from this New York producer. roaringbrookdairy.com

LEHMAN'S: Receive supplies to make mozzarella and chèvre, among other cheeses, with this Ohio company's kits. lehmans.com

LEENER'S: "Squeaky curds" and gouda are among the cheeses you can make with kits from Leener's, also Ohio-based. leeners.com