

Homemade Queso Fresco

This is a very simple recipe for fresh cheese very similar to the kind made in southern Mexico. This is a fairly large recipe but it can be halved easily.

16 cups whole milk (do not use ultra-pasteurized or UP milk)
2 tablespoons kosher salt
½ cup white vinegar

Directions:

In a large heavy stock pot* or dutch oven, combine milk and salt. Heat over medium-high heat to about 190°F (hot but not boiling - use a thermometer for this) stirring frequently. Remove from heat as soon as the desired temperature is reached.

Gradually add vinegar, stirring gently. Let stand for 5 minutes then stir gently again. Curds will begin to form.

Drain the mixture through a double thickness of cheesecloth set in a colander in the sink. Let the liquid drain away for 15 to 20 minutes.

Gather cheese (about 4 cups) and transfer to a small bowl. Cover bowl with plastic film. Refrigerate for at least 30 minutes before serving (can be stored in the refrigerator for up to 3 days).

The cheese will be quite liquid. If you want a firmer cheese, you need to press it for a while. The simplest way to do that is to cut both ends of a clean can (28 oz) and save one of the ends. Place the can on a plate. Spoon the cheese into the can (instead of into a bowl as mentioned above) and cover with the reserved lid. Place a full can of food (about 14 oz or so) on top of the lid as a weight (resist the urge to push down). Place the plate, cans and cheese in the fridge and chill for 4 to 24 hours (the longer you chill it, the firmer it will get but do not let it sit in the can for more than 24 hours).

Variations:

Cilantro Queso Fresco – Stir 2 tablespoons of fresh chopped fresh cilantro into the cheese before chilling it.

Jalapeño Queso Fresco – Stir 1 to 2 tablespoons of fresh chopped jalapeño into the cheese before chilling it.

* Avoid aluminum pots as they may make the cheese taste slightly metallic.