

Salt and Serenity

Homemade Ricotta Cheese

This recipe comes from the September 2009 issue of *Cook's Illustrated*. The real key to good ricotta is to handle it as little as possible. Don't stir too hard, and be very gentle with the curds once they form.

16 cups homogenized milk (whole milk)

1 teaspoon table salt

1/2 -3/4 cups fresh lemon juice (about 5-6 lemons)

1. Heat milk and salt in 7-quart Dutch oven over medium-high, stirring frequently with rubber spatula to prevent scorching, until milk registers 185 degrees F on instant read thermometer, about 15 minutes.
2. Remove pot from heat. Using rubber spatula, slowly stir in 1/2 cup lemon juice until fully incorporated, 15 seconds. Allow milk to stand, undisturbed for 5 minutes. After 5 minutes milk should separate into white solid curds and translucent liquid whey. If after 5 minutes whey is still milky and opaque, add 2 more tablespoons lemon juice, gently stir to combine and let rest 5 minutes longer. Check separation again and repeat with another 2 tablespoons juice until whey is no longer opaque (depending on your milk, whey may appear different shades of yellow or blue). Once milk is separated into curds and whey allow pot to rest for 20 minutes.
3. Line colander or large strainer with double layer of cheesecloth and set over sink. Using large spoon, carefully spoon curds into colander. Discard whey. Using rubber spatula, gently fold curds over themselves until liquid no longer runs out of colander and curds have texture of grainy cream cheese. Use immediately or transfer to an airtight container and refrigerate for up to 3 days.