



Dairy Foods Consulting Westminster Artisan Cheesemaking

Peter Dixon, MS
Artisan Cheesemaker

Asiago

Made in wheels 3.5 inches thick x 12-14 inches in diameter; 17-25 lb.

Italian variety - age	American standard	% Moisture	%FDM	Yield
Fresco: 2-3 months	Fresh, soft: not <60 days	not >45	not <50	10:1
Mezzano: 3-9 months	Medium: not <6 months	not >35	not <45	12:1
Vecchio: >9 months	Old: not <12 months	not >32	not <42	13:1

In the traditional making of Asiago d'Allevo the evening milk stands overnight for 10-12 hours at 60-64 °F and is skimmed in the morning. Evening milk is blended with morning milk to have 3.3-3.6% fat depending on season.

The cheese can also be made from one milking, which is skimmed, for a harder lower fat cheese or blended milk can be standardized by mechanical separation to have same fat content as above

Heat raw milk to 89-93 °F

Add starter culture using:

CHOOZIT TA050 + CHOOZIT LH100

0.5 DCU per 100 lb. milk + 0.25 DCU per 100lb. milk

or

0.25 lb. Rosell Thermo C bulk culture or 0.25 lb. CSL GR14 or GR15 bulk culture per 100 lb. milk

(Double the amounts of starter culture for pasteurized milk)

After 30-45 minutes add 9 ml single strength rennet to 100 lb. milk

Check for flocculation, which is the first sign of milk gelling into curd (should be 12-15 minutes), and multiply time by 2 to get time of waiting from adding rennet to cutting; usually is 25-30 minutes.

Cut curd into rice grain to corn kernel-sized particles; takes about 5-10 minutes

When cutting is finished begin stirring curds and whey

Heat steadily (1°F every 2-3 minutes) while stirring curds and whey to 104 °F in 20 minutes

Cook at this temp. for 15-20 minutes until curds no longer have the tendency to stick together

Heat steadily to 116-118 °F in 20 minutes. Cook at this temp. until curd is firm enough. Curds should be very springy and easy to rub apart in the palms of your hand. Another good test is to squeeze some curds tightly together until all of the whey is pressed out and then pull the piece of curd between your fingers. It should be well knit and cohesive. This tests how well it will press together.

Allow curds to settle to bottom for 5 minutes and then begin to gather all curds by hand and press them together until a well knit cake is formed. Next drag a coarse cheese cloth underneath and lift the curd cake out of vat in the cloth, hang the curd over the vat and let the whey drain off for a few minutes before moving it to the press table.

Open the cloth and cut the curd cake into pieces that will fill the forms. Place the pieces into cloth-lined forms.

This process can also be done entirely in the vat. After the curd cake is formed drain off the whey until there is still 2 inches of whey above the curd. Cut the wheel-sized pieces from the curd cake under the whey one at a time so that the curd stays warm. Lift the pieces one at a time and place them into the cloth-

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lined forms.

Press about one hour with 2 lb. weight to 1 lb. cheese until the wheels are formed.
Take off press, remove cloths, turn wheels, replace with cloths dipped in brine, and press again
Turn wheels one more time during pressing if possible
Leave on press overnight; keep the room at 72-76 °F

Next morning remove wheels from press and move to the brine room at 50-55°F.
After 24 hours brine the wheels for 4-5 hours per lb.
Turn the wheels in the brine once per day and sprinkle dry salt on the tops

Affinage

Dry the rinds in the brine room for 2 to several days and turn the wheels over every day.
Aging at 52-55 °F and 85-90 % RH with moderate ventilation:
After removing from brine scrub rinds with a brush dipped in saturated brine or rub by hand with dry salt every 3-4 days for 2 months. Turn the cheeses over every time you do this. After 2 months, the scrubbing or rubbing can be done just enough to prevent discoloration. The rind will become harder and leathery and change from straw-colored to light brown. This cheese can age for 2 years or more and will have a darker brownish colored rind.

Late Gas Blowing Defects are observed between 3 weeks and 3 months when the cheeses become huffed and gassy inside. The cheeses may even split apart because of excessive gas formation. The texture is very open with lots of gas holes and lateral slits. In one case the flavor can be more like "Swiss," which is due to a high level of Propionic bacteria in the milk and is common if the salt content is too low and/or aging room temp. is too high. If the flavor is rancid and prickly then the cheese is contaminated with Clostridia bacteria. Both of these bacteria can be present in fermented feeds such as corn silage, green chopped grass silage, and balage (wrapped bales), and carry over into the milk. There can be a mild contamination of Propionic bacteria in raw milk when legumes are grazed.

Asiago Grasso Monte:

Whole milk from one or more milkings can be used to produce this semi-soft, full fat cheese. This Asiago is made during the summer months on the Asiago plateau in the foothills of the Dolomites. Raw milk is used. The cultures in the above recipe should work well. The milk is coagulated at 95-97 °F. The curd is cut into large pea-sized pieces and cooked to 118-123 °F before draining and pressing. The cheese is dry salted by rubbing enough salt to equal one percent of the weight of the cheese. This may take a series of rubs over several days. Aging is traditionally for 30-50 days. The paste of the cheese has a pale straw color, numerous holes and a delicate taste. If you want to try this you could use raw milk and age the cheese for 60 days.