



Dairy Foods Consulting
Westminster Artisan Cheesemaking Peter Dixon, MS
Artisan Cheesemaker

Tallegio

This cheese is also known as Stracchino because cheese making was traditionally started after the cows' descent from high mountain pastures. Stracche means tired in the local dialect. This cheese was first made in the Val Tallegio in the 10th and 11th centuries and is currently made in the Lombardy, Veneto and Piedmont regions of Italy. The name Tallegio has been in use since the 20th century. The traditional cheese has always been aged in mountain caves. Deep fractures in the rocks of the caves create a cool and humid microclimate favoring the growth of specific microflora on the surface.

The traditional cheese is made from raw milk. It has a thin, soft, slightly crumpled skin with a soft reddish color and patches of gray mold scattered across the surface. It ripens from the outside towards the center mostly due to the action of yeasts and bacteria on the surface. It has a velvety soft texture and yellow color near the rind and dense, white, firmer and chalky texture near the center. The taste is delicate with a hint of acid in the middle. Ideas for this recipe came from a presentation by Giuseppe Licitra at the Vermont Institute for Artisan Cheese and Cheese: A Guide to the World of Cheese and Cheesemaking by Bruno Battistotti and Italian Cheese by Slow Food Editore.

Although traditionally-made Tallegio is usually aged for no more than 40 days, it may be possible to make this cheese from raw milk and age it for 60 days and still have a good window to sell it in. Washed rind cheeses are relatively stable as long as they are kept cold and packaged in sulfur-coated breathable wrappers such as crystal. Starter cultures are not used in the traditional making of Tallegio and cheese is made after every milking.

For 100 lb. (12 gallons) milk:

Raw milk in small cheese vats (up to 200 liter or 62 gallons) at 92-95° F. No starter is used for fresh milk direct from milking. For older, stored milk starter culture is added:

Use 2.5 DCU (1/4 tsp) of CHOOZIT TA050 for 100 lb. milk.

(Double the amount of starter culture for pasteurized milk)

Ripen milk for 60 min.

Add 9 ml single strength rennet for goat and cow milk and 7 ml for sheep milk (100 lb. milk).

Check for flocculation, which is the first sign of milk gelling into curd (should be 12-15 minutes), and wait 4 times the flocculation from the time of adding rennet to cutting the curd, e.g. 4 x 15 min. = 60 min.

Cut the curd into 2-3 inch pieces. After 5 min. cut the curds again into hazel nut sized pieces. Settle under whey 5 min.

Remove whey from surface of curds. Stir curds and whey briefly and gently transfer curds and whey using scoop or pitcher to the open-ended forms sitting on drain matting. Whey pH is 6.45-6.50 at hooping.

At the end of hooping, turn cheeses in the forms. Do this at least 2 more times, 1 hour apart. Wait 2-3 hours before turning a last time.

Leave in draining area at 71-77° F for 18-24 hours until pH 5.20-5.30.

Rub cheeses with coarse flake dry salt. Move cheeses to aging room the next day.

Affinage:

The cheeses are aged on wooden shelves or on plastic matting on wooden shelves. Conditions are 39-42° F and 90% RH with slight ventilation. The cheeses are periodically turned and brushed with brine or wiped with brine-soaked cloths to promote growth of yeasts and Coryneform bacteria such as *B. linens*. Turning and washing is done every 2-3 days for 2 weeks and then every 3-4 days for 3 more weeks. Cheeses are wrapped in breathable wrappers made for washed rind cheeses such as crystal and stored at 38 F until ready for sale at 60 days of age.