

Rennet and Other Popular Coagulant



Coagulant is a very important ingredient when making cheese. Both animal- and vegetable-based rennets are available in liquid, powder, and tablet form, that work well for home cheese making. In liquid form, rennet is often double strength, so make sure to read the label. To learn about methods for adding rennet to milk, read our article, [Techniques and Tips for Adding Ingredients in Cheese making](#).

Animal Rennet for Home Cheese making

The most common coagulant throughout history is rennet, or *rennin*, the enzyme found in the stomach of young ruminants that have not been weaned from their mother's milk. Rennet is essentially an enzyme used to convert milk sugars (lactose) into lactic acid. The lactic acid then acts upon the milk's proteins, getting them to clump together as solids (curds), and separate from the remaining liquid (whey).

Animal coagulant is almost always calf rennet since it is generally accepted that calf rennet produces better aged cheeses.

We carry single-strength [liquid animal rennet](#) for home cheese making.

Vegetarian Alternatives to Animal Rennet

There are a wide variety of non-animal coagulants available for cheese making, from commercial products to common plants growing in your yard.

Commercial Vegetable Rennet for Home Cheesemaking

Products commonly used as vegetable rennet in home cheese making are actually microbial rennets made from an enzyme produced by the fermentation of a fungus, *Rhizomucor miehei*.

We carry both vegetable rennet product and animal for the home cheese maker:

- [Organic Liquid Vegetable Rennet](#) (double-strength)
- [Vegetable Rennet Tablets](#)

While vegetable rennets work as well as animal rennets to coagulate cheese curds, animal rennet is preferred for aged cheeses. After a long aging period, cheese made with vegetable rennet may develop an off flavor.

Commercial Acid Coagulants for Home Cheesemaking

Cheesemaking supplies such as [citric acid](#) and [tartaric acid](#) are also available as coagulants for some cheeses. These products do the same job as household vinegar or lemon juice, but are much more consistent in their acidity levels and

therefore more reliable for making many soft cheeses.

Both citric acid and tartaric acid are available on our website. Many wonderful cheeses can be made using citric acid, including:

- Chenna
- 30-Minute Mozzarella
- Paneer

Tartaric Acid is used to make the delightfully rich and creamy Mascarpone Cheese.

Common Household Coagulants

Many products commonly found in your kitchen are good coagulants, as well. Lemon juice will curdle milk, as will vinegar, but neither will produce the clean, firm curd needed for quality cheese making, nor are they very strong or effective. These coagulants are generally used in soft cheese making with long ripening periods such as Lemon Cheese, Traditional Whey Ricotta, and Queso Blanco

Junket

Junket is just a very weak form of rennet, traditionally used to set custards. It is possible to set milk with junket, but it should only really be used for soft cheeses because it just isn't strong enough to set a firm curd. Vegetable Rennet Tablets are about five times stronger than Junket tablets.

Cheese recipes usually call for either rennet or a specific acidic coagulant. Using vegetable rennet, animal rennet, or experimenting with homemade plant rennet is a personal choice. Try them all!