



*Under the umbrella of Bainham Rural Women*

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# Aorere Valley Practical Living Series

*Learn • Share • Grow Together*

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## Recipe Booklet

*Session 4: Cheese Making*

23 May 2026 • Bainham Hall, Golden Bay



*Turning a parmesan — the satisfying result of a morning's making*

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## About This Booklet

This collection of recipes was gathered at the fourth session of the Aorere Valley Practical Living Series, held on 23 May 2026 at Bainham Hall.

An enthusiastic group came together to make three very different cheeses: Halloumi, mozzarella and parmesan. We learnt how the basic alchemy of milk, rennet, gentle handling and patience can produce such a range of flavours and textures. From the squeaky freshness of halloumi straight from the whey, to the stretchy satisfaction of homemade mozzarella, to the long-aged ambition of a parmesan wheel, it was a day full of discoveries and connections.

*Our monthly sessions usually run on the 21st of each month, February to November 2026. Everyone is welcome.*



*Making cheese together*



# Halloumi

**Yield:** Approx. 400–500g

**Preparation time:** 3–4 hours active

**Storage:** fridge (in brine) or freeze

## Ingredients

- 4 litres whole milk (not homogenised)
- Microbial rennet, e.g. Renco (approx. 2ml / a few drops)
- Salt
- Optional brine (10%): 3oz / 85g plain salt dissolved in 4 litres cooled, boiled water

## Method

1. Warm the milk to 36–45°C.
2. Take milk off the heat and add the rennet (a few drops, approx. 2ml).
3. Cover the pot and wrap it in a woollen blanket or towel to maintain temperature. Leave for up to 45 minutes.
4. Cut the curds into even 1cm cubes; gently stir with a wooden spoon.
5. Cover and wrap again in the blanket. Leave for up to 2 hours.
6. Place clean cheesecloth (muslin or blue all-purpose cloths) in a colander or halloumi basket.
7. Gently scoop curds with a slotted spoon into the colander/basket. Keep the whey.
8. Place a weight of 2–4kg (water bottle, pot etc.) on top and press the halloumi for up to 4 hours. Pour any collected whey back into the pot.
9. Lift the halloumi from the mould onto a wooden board and cut into slices.
10. Heat the whey to 90°C.
11. Place halloumi slices into the hot whey. Remove once they float, or after several minutes.
12. Place on a wooden board, sprinkle with salt and cover with a fresh cloth. Leave to dry for at least 30 minutes before using.
13. Pat slices dry and refrigerate immediately — store in brine or freeze.

💡 Freezes well. If using homogenised milk, add calcium chloride first.



# Mozzarella

**Yield:** approx. 2 balls

**Preparation time:** 1.5–2 hours

**Storage:** in salted water in fridge, use within a few days

## Ingredients

- 3.8–4 litres milk
- ½ cup apple cider vinegar or lemon juice
- ¾ tsp (2.8ml) rennet
- 2–3 tsp salt
- Unchlorinated water

## Method

1. Start with cold milk — if the milk is warm when you add the acid, it will curdle unevenly.
2. Put milk in a large pot. Dilute the vinegar in 2 cups of cold water, pour into the milk and stir for 1 minute to acidify.
3. Warm the milk slowly to 32°C.
4. Dissolve the rennet in ¼ cup of unchlorinated water.
5. When milk reaches 32°C, remove from heat and stir in the rennet for 1 minute. Let sit for 15–30 minutes, maintaining 32°C.
6. Fill a bowl or container with water and salt; chill in the fridge for later.
7. Once a clean break is achieved, cut the curd into 2.5cm cubes and stir for 15 minutes to release the whey.
8. Drain the whey and catch the curds in a colander lined with cheesecloth. Let the curd rest for 15–30 minutes to knit together.
9. Heat a water bath to 71–82°C.
10. Cut the curd into two large pieces and place them in the hot water bath. Let them heat through, then — using gloved hands — stretch and knead into smooth balls. It may take several goes; the curd needs to be hot enough to stretch freely.
11. Place the balls into the chilled salted water bath to cool.

💡 *The stretching stage is the magic moment. Don't rush it. Keep dipping back into the hot water until the curd is silky and elastic.*



# Parmesan

**Yield:** 800g / 1.8lb

**Preparation time:** 3 hours

**Pressing:** 15 hours

**Curing/ageing:** at least three months (better 10–24 months)

*The key to your success will be in what you do with it once it is out of the press. You need a good curing place ready to go before you start. Use high quality milk and this will be a triumph of your cheesemaking.*

## Ingredients

- ¼ tsp lipase powder
- 7.5 litres / 2 gal milk, fresh, whole
- 1 tsp thermophilic starter
- ½ tsp / 2.5ml liquid calf rennet
- 2 tbsp cooled, boiled water

*Brine (22%): 800g / 28oz plain salt mixed in 4 litres / 1 gal cooled, boiled water*

## Method

1. Mix the lipase in 1 tbsp of cooled, boiled water and leave for 40 minutes to ripen.
2. Warm the milk in a bain-marie to 33°C (91°F), add the thermophilic starter and stir gently for 1 minute. Cover and leave to ripen for 30 minutes, maintaining the temperature by adding hot water to the outer pot of the bain-marie as required.
3. Add the lipase solution and stir gently for 1 minute. Dilute the rennet in 1 tbsp of cooled, boiled water. Don't do this until just before you need it. Then add to the milk and stir gently for 1 minute. Cover and leave to set for 30 minutes, maintaining the temperature by adding hot water to the outer pot of the bain-marie as required.
4. Test the curds for a clean break. If it's soft and wobbly, check the temperature is correct, wait another 5 minutes, then try again. Cut the curd into 5mm cubes (under 1cm). It is difficult to cut such narrow lines in the curd, so be bold and quite fast and don't worry about going a bit crooked. The curds should be about the size of small peas by the time you have finished. If you can't reach all the curds at the bottom, you can cut them up during Step 5. Once cut, leave to settle for 5 minutes.
5. Slowly raise the temperature to 38°C (100°F) over 25 minutes. The easiest way is to add hot water to the outer pot of the bain-marie every 5 minutes or so. Stir slowly occasionally, and cut any large curds into 5mm cubes as they come up to the top.
6. Remove the inside pot from the bain-marie and put it directly onto the element. Heat the curds to 52°C (125°F) over the next 15 minutes. During this time, stir with an up, down and around motion to expel as much whey from the curds as possible. The curds should be quite tough, rice-grain sized and squeaky on the teeth if chewed.
7. Take the pot off the element and test it for 5 minutes, then drain through a sanitised sieve so you capture all the curds.

*Double the recipe for a bigger wheel of cheese. Only use cell rennet (not vegetarian rennet) to ensure proper texture and avoid the cheese turning bitter when it is stored over a long time.*



## Resources

The following books and suppliers were recommended by our group.

**Book:** How to Make Cheese (2015) by Jean Mansfield

### Suppliers: Cultures & Equipment

- Urban Cheese Company: <https://urbancheese.co.nz/>
- Koru Kai Herb Farm: <https://korukai.co.nz/>

## Milk

For best results, use fresh, non-homogenised (unhomogenised) whole milk. Pasteurise it to give the culture the best environment. Be gentle with the milk, so not to disturb the composition. Do not overcook or overstir it. High-fat Jersey or mixed-breed farm milk gives richer results. Note that there will be seasonal variation in the fat and protein contents of the milk.

**There are also books available at Tākaka library** (<https://www.tasmanlibraries.govt.nz/>)

- The cheesemaking workshop: handmade cheeses and the beautiful meals they create (2018) by Lyndall Dykes
- There's always room for cheese (2023) by Colin Wood
- Homemade vegan cheese, yoghurt and milk (2018) by Yvonne Hölzl-Singh

## Food Safety Notes

Home cheesemaking is a deeply rewarding tradition. With a few simple hygiene pre-cautions, it is very safe. Please keep the following in mind:

1. Sterilise all equipment (pots, spoons, colanders, moulds, cheesecloth) before use. Wash in hot soapy water, rinse well, then sanitise with a food-safe sanitiser or by scalding with boiling water.
2. Use a food thermometer throughout. Accurate temperatures are critical for the cultures and rennet to work correctly.
3. Keep all surfaces and hands clean. Cheese is vulnerable to unwanted moulds and bacteria during making and ageing.
4. Discard any cheese that smells strongly off, shows unexpected mould colours (blue-green, pink or black), or has an unusual texture during ageing.
5. Halloumi and mozzarella are fresh cheeses. Refrigerate immediately and consume within a few days or freeze.
6. Parmesan is a long-aged cheese. Store in a cool, humid environment (10–14°C, 85–95% humidity). Turn and wipe regularly during the ageing period.

# Join Us

Usually every 21st of the month, February to November at Bainham Hall, Golden Bay

## Next Session

### Session 5: Fermenting

Sunday 21 June 2026: 10 am – 2 pm

Bainham Hall, Golden Bay

## Acknowledgements

This session was organised and facilitated by the core group of the Aorere Valley Practical Living Series: Fiona Newey, Iona Jelf, Anna Friedlander, Birgit Schauer (Bergie)

The Aorere Valley Practical Living Series is hosted under the umbrella of Bainham Rural Women / Rural Women New Zealand.

## Impressum

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**Published:** 1 June 2026

### Disclaimer

The recipes in this booklet are shared in good faith by community members for personal, non-commercial use. Do you have a favourite cheesemaking, preserving, fermenting or seasonal recipe to share? We'd love to include it in a future edition. Send it to [bergie@connectedpathways.co.nz](mailto:bergie@connectedpathways.co.nz).

While every care has been taken to ensure accuracy, the organisers and contributors accept no liability for outcomes arising from use of these recipes. Readers are encouraged to consult current food safety guidelines for home cheesemaking.