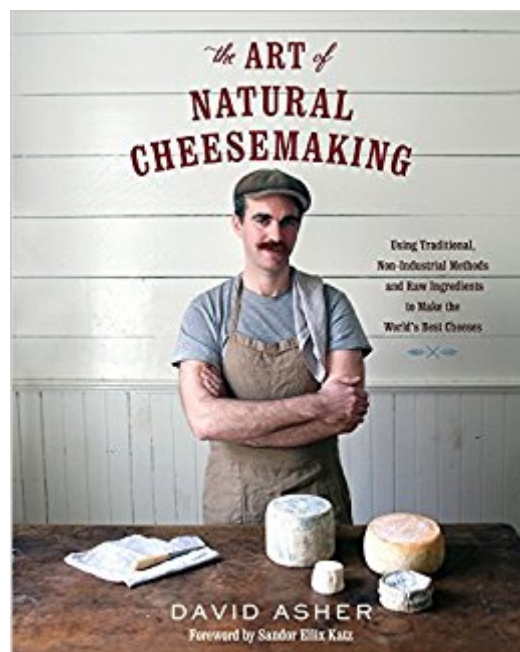




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# The Art Of Natural Cheesemaking: Using Traditional, Non-Industrial Methods And Raw Ingredients To Make The World's Best Cheeses



## Synopsis

Including more than 35 step-by-step recipes from the Black Sheep School of Cheesemaking Most DIY cheesemaking books are hard to follow, complicated, and confusing, and call for the use of packaged freeze-dried cultures, chemical additives, and expensive cheesemaking equipment. For though bread baking has its sourdough, brewing its lambic ales, and pickling its wild fermentation, standard Western cheesemaking practice today is decidedly unnatural. In *The Art of Natural Cheesemaking*, David Asher practices and preaches a traditional, but increasingly countercultural, way of making cheese – one that is natural and intuitive, grounded in ecological principles and biological science. This book encourages home and small-scale commercial cheesemakers to take a different approach by showing them:

- How to source good milk, including raw milk;
- How to keep their own bacterial starter cultures and fungal ripening cultures;
- How make their own rennet – and how to make good cheese without it;
- How to avoid the use of plastic equipment and chemical additives; and
- How to use appropriate technologies.

Introductory chapters explore and explain the basic elements of cheese: milk, cultures, rennet, salt, tools, and the cheese cave. The fourteen chapters that follow each examine a particular class of cheese, from kefir and paneer to washed-rind and alpine styles, offering specific recipes and handling advice. The techniques presented are direct and thorough, fully illustrated with hand-drawn diagrams and triptych photos that show the transformation of cheeses in a comparative and dynamic fashion. *The Art of Natural Cheesemaking* is the first cheesemaking book to take a political stance against Big Dairy and to criticize both standard industrial and artisanal cheesemaking practices. It promotes the use of ethical animal rennet and protests the use of laboratory-grown freeze-dried cultures. It also explores how GMO technology is creeping into our cheese and the steps we can take to stop it. This book sounds a clarion call to cheesemakers to adopt more natural, sustainable practices. It may well change the way we look at cheese, and how we make it ourselves.

## Book Information

Paperback: 320 pages

Publisher: Chelsea Green Publishing (July 8, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1603585788

ISBN-13: 978-1603585781

Product Dimensions: 7.8 x 0.4 x 10.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars 83 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #61,229 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #28 in Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Cooking Methods > Raw #30 in Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Cooking by Ingredient > Cheese & Dairy #59 in Books > Business & Money > Industries > Restaurant & Food

## Customer Reviews

Publishers Weekly- "Organic farmer Asher, creator of the Black Sheep School of cheesemaking, packs plenty of information into this complete guide for both novice and experienced cheesemakers. He advocates strictly non-commercial methods in this detailed manifesto, showing aspiring cheese artisans how to craft indigenous cultures, make natural rennet, source quality raw milks, and construct their own caves. The 30 recipes with photos require neither additives nor sterilization and include methods for making chÃvre, paneer, feta, yogurt-based cheeses, and aged rinded varieties (alpine, blue, and gouda). Chapters on salt, kefir, and the ecology of cheese are included. Asher's political message is overt: He feels that regulations against using raw milk stand in the way of "your right to practice a natural and traditional cheese making." His organic method is a political act in favor of 'cheese sovereignty' and takes a stand against corporate interference. Asher's "contraband cheese" techniques aim to recover the traditional quality of cheese that has been lost. "If you want to know every possible detail about cheesemaking the natural way and on a small scale in your home, The Art of Natural Cheesemaking is the book for you--even if you'd just like to dabble in your kitchen. There are chapters on kefir, yogurt cheeses and paneer for beginners and, for advanced students, detailed instructions on how to make rennet from the fourth stomach of a calf. Everything is beautifully illustrated and carefully explained. This book will entice many to join the ranks of those engaged in the art of transforming milk to delicious end products. As the old saying goes, "Blessed are the cheesemakers." Many more will become blessed thanks to David Asher's work."-- Sally Fallon Morell, president, the Weston A. Price Foundation, and cheesemaker, P. A. Bowen Farmstead "David Asher's book is brave and important, teaching us to tend to what matters by helping us understand process before recipes. This book expands the boundaries of sustainability, deepening the power of independent autonomy and local flavor, making our world more delicious."--Shannon Hayes, author, Radical Homemakers:

Reclaiming Domesticity from a Consumer Culture

“The Art of Natural Cheesemaking is a breakthrough book. The interest among eaters to explore this next stage in do-it-yourself living in the 21st century has finally reached dairy. What’s great about Asher’s book is that it is practical and zeroes in on cheese products one may actually make successfully at home. It is unlikely that DIY cheesemaking will put any cheesemonger or cheese producer out of business. Quite the opposite, in fact: The more we remove the mystery to manufacturing even the simplest of cheeses at home, the more we will come to admire the craftsmanship that dairy farmers and artisanal cheesemakers bring to their work, to make life better and tastier for the rest of us.”

— Richard McCarthy, executive director, Slow Food USA

David Asher is an organic farmer, goatherd, and farmstead cheesemaker, who lives on the gulf islands of British Columbia. A guerrilla cheesemaker, Asher explores traditionally cultured, noncorporate methods of cheesemaking. Though mostly self-taught, he picked up his cheese skills from various teachers, including a Brown Swiss cow, named Sundae, on Cortes Island. Asher’s Black Sheep School of Cheesemaking offers cheesemaking workshops in partnership with food-sovereignty-minded organizations and communities. His workshops teach a cheesemaking method that is natural, DIY, and well suited to any home kitchen. He has been teaching cheesemaking for over seven years.

Sandor Ellix Katz is a fermentation revivalist. A self-taught experimentalist who lives in rural Tennessee, his explorations in fermentation developed out of overlapping interests in cooking, nutrition, and gardening. This book, originally published in 2003, along with his *The Art of Fermentation* (2012) and the hundreds of fermentation workshops he has taught around the world, have helped to catalyze a broad revival of the fermentation arts. *Newsweek* called *Wild Fermentation* “the fermenting Bible,” and *The New York Times* calls Sandor “one of the unlikely rock stars of the American food scene.”

For more information, check out his website [www.wildfermentation.com](http://www.wildfermentation.com).

I write this review on the day of release, after having read through the book somewhat thoroughly. Obviously, it’s hard to write a review on a recipe book without having tried a few recipes from it at least, this being a cheesemaking book and having most of the recipes require months, I hope you’ll humor me. I have many cheesemaking books. I’ve had successes making various cheeses, but I’ve never gotten serious about the craft. I just may after reading this. The reason? Everything is so APPROACHABLE. David Asher is to cheesemaking as Sandor Katz is to fermentation (a point

further made since Mr. Katz wrote the foreword.) He takes something that's been done for ages that's been so sterilized to be unrecognizable, and takes it back to how it's been done for ages. I'm sure many of you who are interested in cheesemaking have looked at recipes for a cheese and thought "how did they get a thermophilic culture, keep it at exactly 82 degrees for 80 minutes over a wooden fire, and keep it in a sterile cheese cave?" Of course they didn't, they had tradition. What we have now is meticulous and repeatable, but I'd argue is a bit soulless. What Mr. Asher is bringing back is the soul. He steps you logically through every step. He even shows you how to HARVEST YOUR OWN RENNET. Think about that for a second. When was the last time you saw a cheesemaking book go into more than a page of info about rennet? I actually happened upon David's (very infrequently updated) blog by happenstance, looking for a recipe for homemade blue cheese. I loved the way he wrote, and the passion he clearly held for cheesemaking. It carried over well in this book. It's an absolute joy, and so approachable. If you're anything like I am, a lot of cheesemaking is a mystery. Why should I get this culture over that one? How did these cultures come about? Why can't I use what's floating around my house? It's all explained here, simple enough for a dummy like me to be excited to try it out. Blue cheese culture? He shows you how to cultivate it on your own. It's amazing. Who'd have thought a moldy piece of sourdough bread was something you didn't want to throw out? I've learned more in this book in one day of owning it than I have reading my (I think 8 now) other cheesemaking books over years. Perhaps they primed me to know what Mr. Asher is talking about a bit better. I've had several "aha" moments though, things I didn't even know I didn't know suddenly making a whole lot of sense. I know I've said it before, but again, the word of the day here is "approachable". It takes away the mystery and puts the power of cheesemaking in your hands. I haven't been so excited about a cookbook in a long time. He discusses and shows how to make pretty much any cheese I can think of. From fresh cheeses such as paneer and mozz, to goat cheeses (chevre) to blue cheeses, to swiss cheeses. Common standbys like cheddar are obviously included as well. He takes you through all the important parts of cheesemaking, from his chapter on why he wrote this book and why natural cheesemaking is something worth pursuing, to milk and how to source it (raw, please!). He talks about all the different cultures and how to...culture them (a real eye opener for me. Honestly, this is worth buying the book for alone, knowing how all this stuff comes about). Tools you need, making a cheese cave, even goes over salt and its importance over a whole chapter. Guys, if you skipped down to the bottom of this review, I don't blame you. I'm rarely long winded or as verbose as I have been here. I only get that way when I'm excited about something, and I rarely get excited. Get this book. Get it if you love cheese. Get it if you hate factory cheese and want to shove some artisanal gouda up their factory's

tailpipe. Get it if you're curious about how cheese USED to be made before you could buy a packet of "thermophilic A". Get it if you want to support a passionate author seemingly reviving the craft singlehandedly. The point is: Buy. This. Book.

I found this book just after becoming interested in cheese making. I had thought about it for years and finally bought rennet and cultures and registered for a class on Craftsby. After a couple of frustrating attempts and essentially no help from the teacher, I started to look for my own answers and found David Asher's book. Amazingly, he scheduled a class in Toronto for the week after my book arrived. I have camembert aging in my new wine fridge and sheeps milk "chevre" fermenting in a pot. I've made a simple yogurt cheese, a very bad chevre and mysost and gjetost from the whey. I am ready to try a blue. When I found David, I was in the process of trying to unravel the world of commercial cultures and it seemed confusing, expensive and unnatural. I am now making the kind of cheese that feels good to me. Finding good milk is still a challenge and not all my cheeses have been a success, but I am beginning to understand the issues and have a guidebook to lead me in the right direction. I actually cannot imagine making cheese without this book.

I have been making cheese for a couple of years with raw milk from my goats and my cow share. I am fairly serious about it, I have 4 or so cheese books and various go-to websites that I have relied on. I have experimented with a number of different styles which have come out good enough to have a healthy little barter business with my friends and neighbours. But one thing always bothered me: why did I have to buy this stuff in little frozen packets to make cheese? Why did I have to sterilise everything with bleach solution? 1000 years ago in France, they weren't handing out little packets of moulds and cultures! And I milk my goats by hand- nothing sterile about that process! Asher's book is the one I have been waiting for. His unequivocal answer to those questions is YOU DON'T. As other reviewers have noted, it is a bit early to pass judgement on the recipes as it will be weeks and months before I have the final products (watch this space), but the framework he sets out resonates with my farming philosophy and understanding of milk microbiology in a way that no other cheesemaking method has. I also did a workshop with him which was definitely worthwhile- keep an eye on his website for his events. If you want to make cheese in the natural, traditional way, THIS is the book to buy. update: Now I have delved into the book and am giving it a workout. chevre: Awesome. Better than the chevre I used to make with commercial starters. Dream cheese: incredibly easy to make and much better than cream cheese. Especially for those who are freaked out by the thickeners and other weird things in commercial cream cheese. Camembert: in the cave

to age, but so far looking and smelling wonderful. Mason Jar St. Marcellin: in the process of draining, but tasting great so far. Slow Mozzarella: fail. I think I didn't let it get acidic enough before stretching. I also have never read mozzarella before, and I understand that despite it often featuring in beginner cheesemaking courses, it actually is not really a cheese for beginners. I shall try again! The process just feels so much better without all the sterilising, vanishingly small dabs of powders from the freezer, fear of bacteria and plastic stuff. A very intuitive and efficient cheesemaking experience. For example, when I made the brie and the mozzarella, the basic curd was made together in one huge pot, drained in moulds on the same draining rack, just split up when it came time to ferment the mozzarella and drain the camembert. Very cool.

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