

Cheesemaking & Fermentation:

Here are a few ideas, tips, tricks, hints to consider before teaching the course.

1. **Practice** the recipe at least one time before you make it. This will make sure you have the necessary ingredients on hand. Also, if you fail or goof up, you can figure out what you did wrong and remind students to be careful at step x,y or z so they don't make the same mistake.
2. **Date** your supplies. Most of the cultures and rennet etc will not come with a date on the packet or bottle. Put a date on these. They do keep for quite a while (2 years) but they do loose potency.
3. **Milk.** Have students make ½ gallon recipes. That way, if they make a mistake they've only lost a half gallon of milk. Have them bring in their own milk, but always have a gallon or two on hand for the ones who forget. The milk can sit out on your countertops all day. It won't spoil and will warm up to your required recipe temps faster than refrigerated milk. The varieties of milk students bring in will add to the variety of outcomes in products. You will be surprised how one recipe yields 10 different results from 20 students.
4. Split the **starter cultures.** The packets are small and are made for setting 2 gallon batches. I give each student a half a packet just to ensure their success, but a quarter packet in a half gallon of milk is fine if you are on a budget. Keep the cultures in a ziplock baggy in your freezer. It will not spoil. It may go bad after a few years, but hopefully you will use up your supply every year. Use the left-over cultures at home as you practice cheesemaking. It does not hurt anything if the packets are left out of the fridge a day or two before you remember to put them away.
5. Charge a **course fee.** I think we charge \$35 extra as a course fee. This definitely covers the cost of the starter cultures and rennet. If students bring their own milk, reduce the fee a bit. I buy samples of kimchi, yogurts, kombucha's, shrubs and ginger beers, and sourdough bread with this budget. I mainly use these fees to buy cheeses for our tasting event and celebration at the end of the course. Buy some good, high end 10 year old cheddars to share with students. They will find the sharp taste 'yucky'. Old people like it because our taste buds decline as we age – so we are glad to taste anything.
6. **Raw milk.** It's great if you have some students from dairy farms that want to try their own milk, or maybe students have a family goat they are milking. Raw milk produced under clean conditions will be fine for cheesemaking. In many cases it already contains beneficial bacterial cultures that contribute to the flavor profile of the product. I always make my raw milk students use the same lab station so that there is little chance of cross-contamination in the off chance that their milk contains a pathogen.
7. **Gallon batches.** When you are practicing at home you should try to practice with a full gallon rather than a half gallon. I get better results with this bigger mass of milk and cheese than with smaller half gallons. Some of Ricki Carroll's recipes call for two gallons and that also helps with good outcomes, but it can waste a lot of milk if you make a mistake. Once you are comfortable with gallon size batches, downsize to half gallons so you can guide your students appropriately.



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