

Aging Terminology



Aging

- The process of distinctive flavor and texture development in cheese as it is acted upon by microbes and enzymes in controlled conditions.
- Can take a few days to many years.
- Also called curing, ripening, or affinage.
- Most cheeses are aged.

Aging cheese

Affinage

(AH-fee-nahj)

- French term referring to the aging of cheese.
- Some retailers today age cheese in affinage cases or walk-in cheese coolers.

Affineur

(AH-fee-nyoor)

- Person in charge of monitoring and adjusting the conditions to enhance cheese aging

Fresh

- Sometimes called Unripened.
- Cheese that is not aged or aged for a very short time.
- Examples include:
 - Cream cheese
 - Ricotta
 - Mascarpone
 - Feta
 - Queso Fresco
 - Queso Blanco

Brine/Brining

- Cheese bathed or briefly soaked in a saltwater solution during the curing process.
- Examples include:
 - Feta
 - Asiago
 - Mozzarella
 - Queso Fresco



Washing rinds of aging cheeses

Washed rind

- Cheese rind is bathed with brine, oil, whey, or alcohol (beer, wine, brandy) during aging.
- May encourage development of a desirable orange-red bacteria on the rind.
- Imparts a unique flavor.
- Examples include:
 - Limburger
 - Port Salut
 - Appenzeller

Bloomy Rind

- Named for the intentionally-produced edible, white *Penicillium* mold surface on soft-ripened cheese. Mold spores are sprayed on the cheese before curing.
- Bloomy rind cheeses are surface ripened.
- Examples include:
 - Brie
 - Camembert



Bloomy rind on Brie

Surface ripened

- Cheese ripened from the outside in by intentional application of harmless microorganisms to the surface.
- Examples include:
 - Brie
 - Camembert
 - Chèvre
 - Limburger
 - Brick



Surface-ripened Limburger

Crystallized surface

- Certain cheeses may naturally develop tiny white crystals of lactic acid, called calcium lactate crystals, on their surfaces.
- Not to be confused with internal crystals.
- Mouthfeel is slightly crunchy.
- Examples include:
 - Cheddar
 - Gouda
 - Gruyère



Gruyère with a crystallized surface

Natural Rind

- Rind develops naturally during aging, without special treatment.
- Sometimes the rind is coated with paraffin wax.
- Examples include:
 - Parmesan
 - Pecorino Romano
 - Emmental

Rindless

- Examples include:
 - Gouda
 - Edam
 - Cheddar
 - Colby
 - Mozzarella
 - Muenster