

Food Safety Practices for Handling Cheese & Cheddar Cheese Curd Displays

In addition to refrigeration, time may be used as a public health control for cheese curds intended for the production of cheddar cheese.

Fresh Cheddar Cheese Curds

Dairy plants and retail establishments may sell fresh cheddar cheese curds, held out of refrigeration, if:

- The cheese curds are not held for more than 24 hours from the time of manufacturing.
- The cheese curds are manufactured according to law.
- The cheese curds are packaged at a retail food establishment or processing plant.
- The cheese curds are labeled as specified in [Wis. Admin. Code § 3-602.11](#) with the date or time of manufacture. Cheese curds marked only with the date must be discarded no later than midnight on the day of manufacture if held at ambient temperature. Those marked with the date *and* time may be held up to 24 hours prior to being discarded if held at ambient temperature.
- The establishment maintains records indicating the amount of product displayed and the amount of the product discarded for each day that cheese curds are displayed for sale at ambient temperature.
- The cheese curds in unmarked containers or packages that exceed the 24-hour limit are discarded.

Retail Cheese

Cheese is defined as hard, semi-soft or pasteurized process in [21 CFR](#).

- **Hard Cheese:** manufactured with a moisture content not exceeding 39%. Hard cheeses are exempt from date marking and refrigeration requirements but must be labeled properly.

- **Semi-Soft Cheese:** contains more than 39% and less than 50% moisture. Semi-soft cheeses must be held at 41°F or below. Some semi-soft cheeses are exempt from date marking requirements.

Hard Cheese Examples

- Parmesan • Gruyere • Reggiano • Romano
- Sap • Sago • Asiago (old and medium)
- Aged Cheddar (packaged in wax coating)
- Ultra-pasteurized cheese and aseptically packaged milk products
- Pasteurized process cheese foods and spreads, (manufactured according to 21 CFR 133.169 and labeled as containing an acidifying agent which inhibits the growth of *Listeria monocytogenes*) that have met Tanaka study or challenge study criteria.

Semi-Soft Cheese Examples (exempt from date marking, refrigeration required)

- Asiago (fresh and soft) • Blue • Caciocavallo
- Siciliano • Brick • Gouda • Muenster
- Roquefort • Gorgonzola • Monterey Jack
- Provolone • Monterey • Edam • Swiss
- Limburger • Pasteurized Process Cheese
- Low Moisture Part-Skim Mozzarella

Additional Examples (Date marking and refrigeration required)

- Brie • Camembert • Cottage • Ricotta • Teleme
- Mozzarella (full flat) • Cream Cheese
- Cold pack cheese and cheese spreads

More information

- [Food Code Fact Sheets](#)



Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection

Division of Food and Recreational Safety

2811 Agriculture Dr., P.O. Box 8911, Madison, WI 53708

<https://www.datcp.wi.gov>