

## **Aged Cheese – another try**

Have you ever tried something and failed miserably? Sometimes you can just let it go, other times it continues to nag at you and occasionally you get a taunting mental “raspberry” as a reminder of the failure.

My failure of being able to make aged cheese has been doing that to me for years. I tried and I failed numerous times so have not even attempted it for about 7 years. Now, as we try to slip into retirement, work on selling our fiber processing business, and reducing our Angora goat herd, I have more time so – here I go...

In the past I tried to age my cheese in the cellar. The year round temperature is pretty ideal at 50 to 55 degrees. To control the humidity I have tried both plastic ripening boxes and an old freezer. I think the real problem has been a combination of my attention span (or lack thereof) and access to the cellar. We really don't have cellar steps, it is more like a ladder. We only go “down cellar” when we need frozen meat, canned goods, squash or onions. None of those are daily occurrences.

Time to move on: I invested in a used dorm sized 3.2 cubic foot refrigerator off Craigslist just 15 miles away and \$40. Next it was a thermostat controller. Unfortunately, there was no good place to put it on the main floor of the house, so I put it upstairs. Our upstairs is a combination storage room and guest room. We do not heat it unless we have company but there are real stairs for easy access.

The next problem/s I had in the past was bloomy rind cheeses – I can let those go for now, and finally waxing. For some reason I did not do well at waxing, even when I used cream wax first. The mold always seemed to grow under the wax and I couldn't see it. Knowing that I needed to explore alternatives.

Here is where I am today. I have a natural rind goat's milk gouda, a bandaged cranberry Wensleydale aka Yorkshire cheese, and an oiled rind Farmhouse cheddar in the cave (I can hardly believe it – all are fine so far). The temperature in the cave is fine – I haven't even needed to plug in the fridge or thermostat controller yet but I am having problems controlling the humidity. If I keep the door closed it goes all the way to 97% (lots of mold to clean off during my daily turnings), if I leave the door ajar it drops to 55%. My latest trial is using some folded cardboard in the seal – I'm getting closer.