

# The Essentialist

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## Cheese Making: Waxing the Round

By Catherine Haug

*(all photos by C. Haug & S. Riedesel unless noted otherwise)*

See also: [Cheese Making with Kalispell Creamery Milk](#)

Thanks to Shelli for allowing me to photograph this process, and learn at the same time.



## Introduction

### Online Resources

We used several online resources for ideas on how to do this safely and efficiently. Our primary resource for the entire [cheesemaking](#) and [waxing](#) process has been Dr. David Fankhauser, PhD; see his index at [Fankhauser's Cheese Page](#). And see 'Sources' (below) for more.

### Cheese Waxing supplies

- pressed and dried cheese
- beeswax
- pie pan
- spoon for drizzling or brush for coating

### Precautions

1. The cheese should be well chilled before waxing, to get a better seal. The seal is important to keep molds and putrefactive bacteria from getting into your cheese.
2. You can use paraffin, cheese wax or beeswax.
  - Beeswax is your best sustainable and renewable choice. Smells nice too.
  - Paraffin is brittle and cracks easily, breaking the seal. Cheesewax is made from paraffin with additional ingredients to make it pliable for a better seal. However, I don't recommend any paraffin products because they are simply not sustainable.

[Wax made from soy might be another option, but the way soy is grown in America makes it not a sustainable choice.]

3. Ensure the entire surface is well coated with the wax; seal any holes or cracks by dribbling or brushing melted wax over them.
4. Press out any bubbles in the wax, as they can interfere with a good seal.

## Our Method

### Step 1: Melting the wax

We placed a chunk of beeswax in a glass pie pan, then placed the pan in a 350° F oven to melt, until it started to bubble.

Many sources recommend melting in a microwave, but this is not safe as the wax could ignite. Other sources suggest using a double boiler, but humidity could be an issue. We found using a pie pan in the oven worked well (1), at least for beeswax.



Cutting Slab of Beeswax



Melted Beeswax

### Step 2: Readying the cheese

While the wax was melting, we removed the pressed cheese from the fridge and unwrapped its bandage. It should be chilled so that the wax adheres better.



### Step 2: Dipping the cheese in wax

We removed the pan from oven, set the cheese in the wax for just a few moments, then removed it to a sheet of waxed paper, so the beeswax could harden.



We used a pancake turner to place the cheese into and then remove it from the hot wax. Unfortunately, the wax hardened quickly so that when we removed the tool, it took much of the wax with it, leaving a blank spot on the cheese. So we used a spoon to drizzle hot wax on the exposed area, ensuring a good seal with the wax that had stayed with the cheese. Most sources suggest using a brush, but we found the spoon worked well (and we didn't have a brush).

See photo of first side with its first wax coating (below, left). You can see how uneven it is. (Sorry about that shadow - the wax really wasn't green...)

Next we repeated the dip in the wax (below, center) followed by removal to the waxed paper, for the other side of the disc of cheese.

Then we rolled it like a wheel to wax the sides of the cheese and returned it to the waxed paper (Sorry, no photo of this step).

We repeated this process two more times for three total coats of wax (below, right), using a spoon to drizzle wax on areas that were not coated, or that had cracked.



First Side Waxed



Waxing Side 2



After 3 Coats of Beeswax

### Reusing beeswax

Beeswax can be expensive. You may want to save all the used beeswax (including what you peel off your cheese). Simply melt it down and strain it through buttermuslin or fine cheesecloth for reuse (3)

### Sources & References

We found several online resources for ideas on how to do this safely and efficiently:

1. [Waxing your Cheese: Why and How](#) by Dr. Fankhauser. He recommends using a pie pan for melting and dipping the cheese, which works well. He also uses bits of old crayon to color the wax, which we don't recommend. Even though they say 'non-toxic,' we are wary.
2. [Fankhauser's Cheese Page](#) (Index)
3. [Red Cheese Wax](#) from Cheesemaking.com, is a product page that has good information on safety tips, how & why wax, and allergens.
4. [How to Apply Wax to hard Cheese](#) from Leeners.com describes using cheese wax, whereas we used beeswax, but there's lots of good info here.
5. [How to Wax Cheese](#) from I Make Cheese (blog)
6. [Sustainable goat dairying: Rona's "Beeswaxing" Method](#) has great info specific to beeswax

### Related posts & files (this site)

- [Cheese Making with Kalispell Creamery Milk](#)
- [Gathering Summary: Making Cheese & Tofu](#) (152 KB)
- [The EssentialList: Cheese & Tofu Making](#) (124 KB)
- [Cheese Making Handout](#) (127 KB)
- [Gathering Summary: Managing an Organic Beehive](#) (pdf)
- [ESP Gathering Summary: Pollinators & their Habitat](#) (pdf, 336 kb)