SMOKED · MEDIUM

Cold-Smoked Cheese on the Kamado with a Pellet Tube, No Charcoal Lit

A closed kamado, cold and without a single charcoal ember: just a tube of apple pellets smouldering without flame and three cheeses taking on smoke for hours while the dome stays below 25 °C.



PREP	COOK	SERVINGS	TEMPERATURE
30 min	180 min	8	20 °C

Ingredients

- **400 g** semi-cured manchego, in a wedge about 3 cm thick
- **300 g** block mozzarella (the pizza kind, not fresh mozzarella in brine)
- **1 ud** sheet of baking paper, if the grate has traces of grease
- **1 ud** country loaf (pan de pueblo or hogaza), to serve
- **100 g** shelled walnuts
- **400 g** young gouda in a block, wax coating removed (if it has one)
- **1 ud** tube filled to the top with 100% apple pellets, 6 mm, dry
- **1 ud** roll of cling film or waxed paper, for wrapping
- **150 g** membrillo (quince paste)
- **2 cda** rosemary honey

Method

1 PICK THE MORNING AND MEASURE

This recipe starts with a thermometer, not a fire. Lay one of the CIRYCASE's two probes on the grate of the closed kamado as an ambient probe and wait five minutes: if it reads below 20 °C, you have room; between 20 and 25 °C it can be done, with an eye on it; above 25 °C, it is not the day. On the Costa Blanca that means mornings in autumn, winter or early spring, and first thing. Set the thermometer's timer to 30 minutes.

2 DRY THE CHEESE

Take the cheeses out of the fridge 30-60 minutes ahead and leave them uncovered on a kitchen rack somewhere cool. A cold cheese put into a smoky chamber condenses water on its surface, and that damp film traps smoke unevenly and bitterly. Cut the gouda and the mozzarella into blocks 3-4 cm thick; leave the manchego as a wedge but strip its rind if it is paraffin or plastic-coated, since it neither takes smoke nor gets eaten. Pat everything dry with kitchen paper just before it goes in.

3 PREPARE THE CHAMBER, NO CHARCOAL

Clear the ash from the basket and leave the charcoal grate empty: not a single briquette goes into this recipe. Fit the clean cooking grate; if it still holds grease from a previous cook, put a piece of baking paper the size of each cheese under it, without covering the whole grate, which would cut off the smoke from below. Open the Kamado Bono's bottom vent a centimetre and the top one halfway: with no fire, that small draught is enough for the smoke to circulate rather than stagnate.

4 LOAD AND LIGHT THE TUBE

Fill the Naisfei tube to the top with the apple pellets and tap it a few times so they settle. Aim the Campingaz torch at the open end for 45-60 seconds, until the first pellets burn with a live flame. Stand the tube upright on a non-flammable surface, outside the kamado, and let it flame for 10 minutes: the ember needs that time to bed in so it does not go out once it is inside the chamber.

5 PUT THE FLAME OUT BEFORE IT GOES IN

Blow on the flame until it disappears and check that the end is left with a red ember and thin smoke, no fire. This step separates cold smoke from melted cheese: a tube with a flame inside the ceramic is a real heat source, and the ceramic holds that heat. Pick it up with a glove or tongs and lay it on the empty charcoal grate at the bottom, off to one side and away from the cheese. Close the dome and check that smoke leaves the top.

6 PLACE THE CHEESE AND CLOSE

Spread the cheeses over the clean grate with at least 3 cm between pieces, so the smoke washes every face, and leave the CIRYCASE ambient probe at cheese height without touching it. Close the dome. For the first 10 minutes the smoke should leave the top vent thin and bluish; if it comes out white and dense, open the bottom vent a little more to give the tube air and wait for it to clear.

7 CHECK EVERY 30 MINUTES

Each time the timer goes, look at two things without opening up: the ambient probe reading and the colour of the smoke leaving the top. Above 25 °C, open the dome fully, let the chamber come back down to air temperature and close it again. If the smoke stops, take the tube out with a glove or tongs: refill it if the pellets have burnt through, relight it with the torch and repeat the flame step outside the kamado. At the one-hour mark, turn each piece over with clean hands.

8 TAKE THEM OUT IN TURN

The mozzarella comes out at 2 hours: it is the softest and the first to saturate. The gouda and the manchego hold for between 2 and a half and 3 hours, depending on how strong you want the result. Colour guides you as much as the clock: an even golden tone, no dark patches. Move the cheeses to a kitchen rack and leave them in the air, somewhere cool, for 1 hour, so the surface dries and loses its acrid edge.

9 WRAP AND REST

Wrap each piece separately in cling film or waxed paper, pressed tight with no air pockets, label it with the date and put it in the fridge. The cheese needs several days of rest for the surface smoke to migrate inwards; opening it the same day only shows you the bitter layer. To serve, take it out 30 minutes ahead, slice it thinly and set it out with the bread, the membrillo, the walnuts and a thread of honey.

Editor's tips

- Start with the young gouda if this is your first time: it is the easiest to find in any supermarket, the most forgiving in texture and the one that best shows the difference between 2 and 3 hours of smoke.
- Dry pellets or nothing: a pellet that has taken on moisture swells, burns badly and gives white smoke. Keep the BBQ-Toro bag sealed and indoors, not next to the kamado.
- Do not open the dome to have a look outside the 30-minute checks: every opening empties the chamber of smoke, and you have to wait for it to fill again before the cheese carries on taking flavour.
- Coarse salt on a tray or an already-cured salmon take the same tube and the same cold chamber; butter does too, but with the chamber below 20 °C and for less time, because it softens long before cheese does.
- Why 25 °C and not 30: above 30 °C the fat in the cheese sweats, and this recipe works to a 25 °C target to leave a margin; that is why you open the dome as soon as the probe goes past it. Set-up, a month-by-month calendar for the Costa Blanca and safety with fish are in the cold smoking guide.

Gear for this recipe

Kamado Bono Media 51 cm

A kamado with a 51 cm grate is the chamber this recipe needs: room for three cheeses set apart without touching, and enough volume for the tube's smoke to spread rather than concentrate on a single piece. The Kamado Bono Media brings here what any thick ceramic brings, but the other way round from usual: it works as a sealed vessel, not as a heat store. The gaskets and the heavy dome close the chamber, and the two vents let you set a minimal draught so the smoke circulates without warm air getting in from outside. It is also a kamado you can actually buy today, and the medium format suits anyone who wants to smoke without giving over a large appliance to three blocks of cheese.

mikamado.es/en/kamados/kamado-bono-media-51

BBQ-Toro 100% apple wood smoking pellets, 1 kg (6 mm calibre)

6 mm pellets are the format a tube like the Naisfei takes well: they burn in a chain, one pellet lighting the next, and give continuous smoke with no chunks going out or flaring up all at once the way a wood chip would. That they are 100% apple, with no filler woods blended in, matters for a dairy product: fruitwood smoke is mild and sweet, and does not overpower a young gouda or a mozzarella. The 1 kg bag stretches to several tube sessions, provided it is kept sealed and dry: a pellet that has taken on moisture swells, burns badly and produces the white smoke that turns cheese bitter. For different intensities, the guide to smoking woods helps you decide whether to switch to cherry or alder.

mikamado.es/en/accesorios/bbq-toro-pellets-manzano-1kg

Naisfei Cold Smoke Tube 15 cm, 304 Stainless Steel

The tube is the piece that makes the recipe possible. It is a 15 cm perforated cylinder of 304 stainless steel that you fill with pellets, light at one end and let burn without flame, releasing smoke across its whole perforated surface. Because it does not depend on charcoal, it works in an unlit kamado, which is exactly what cold smoking demands. The 15 cm length fits a medium chamber like the 51 cm Bono's: it lies flat on the charcoal grate without touching the walls. The 304 stainless steel cleans up with a brush once cold and adds no off-flavours to the smoke. Of every accessory involved here, it is the one that changes the result the most.

mikamado.es/en/accesorios/naisfei-tubo-ahumador-humo-frio-15cm

Campingaz — Gas Torch for Lighting Charcoal

Lighting a pellet tube with matches or firelighters is slow and leaves residues that end up in the smoke; a gas torch settles it in under a minute aimed at the pellets in the open end. The Campingaz gives a directed flame and lets you keep your hand well away from the tube while it catches. In this recipe it is used twice if need be: for the initial lighting and to revive the tube if the smoke stops mid-session. It is the same torch that will light the charcoal for any recipe cooked over embers, so it is not a purchase reserved for cold smoking. It is stored away from the kamado, with the gas shut off.

mikamado.es/en/accesorios/campingaz-antorcha-gas-encendido-carbon

CIRYCASE Dual-Probe Thermometer, 16.3 cm Probes and Timer

In cold smoking the thermometer does not measure the food, it measures the chamber, which is why one of the CIRYCASE's two probes is used as an ambient probe, resting on the grate at cheese height. It is the only honest way to know whether the dome is staying below 25 °C: dome dials are designed for cooking temperatures, not for reading 20 °C accurately. The built-in timer marks the checks every 30 minutes, which is the rhythm for checking the smoke colour and the reading. The second probe is left free for the outside air, useful for seeing how much margin is left as the morning starts to warm up.

mikamado.es/en/accesorios/cirycase-termometro-doble-sonda

Full recipe at: mikamado.es/en/recetas/queso-ahumado-humo-frio-kamado

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