

Cashew Cream Cheese Base

Swick

Makes 2 1/2 cups | Active Time: 15 minutes | Total Time: 12 hours

Step 1: Soaking the Cashews

- 300 g (approx 2 1/4 cup) raw cashews
- Place the cashews into a bowl and cover with water. Let soak for a few hours, or overnight.

Step 2: Culturing/Fermenting the Cashew Mixture | Optional

- 1 1/2 tsp powdered probiotic (approx 2 to 3 capsules)
 - 1/4 to 1/2 cup water, if needed*
- To culture, the cashews, blend together the soaked cashews, probiotic, and water until you reach a really smooth consistency. Scrape the sides and continue to pulse until smooth.

Note: The amount of water will depend on your food processor and the final consistency you are looking for. We use an industrial food processor so we don't actually use any water.

Place this mixture into a bowl and loosely cover with a piece of cheesecloth, a nut bag, or cover with plastic wrap and poke a few holes in it.

Let sit at room temperature for 12 to 72 hours to allow to culture to your liking.

Step 3: Flavoring the Cashew Cream Cheese

- 2 1/2 tbsp fresh lemon juice*
- 2 tbsp nutritional yeast
- 1 tsp onion granules
- 1/4 to 1/2 tsp sea salt, to taste
- water, just enough to blend the cashews

Note: Depending on how you intend to use the cream cheese (like for something sweet), you may not need to add anything else to it — maybe just a bit of lemon juice (if you didn't ferment it, or you just want it to be a bit more tart).

To flavor, the cream cheese for something savory, add the nutritional yeast, onion granules, and salt and taste for seasoning. If needed, add a bit of lemon juice and/or more salt, etc.

Note: If you have NOT cultured/fermented the cashew, you can simply blend together the cashews, water, lemon juice, nutritional yeast, and onion granules until you reach a really smooth consistency.

Use this cashew cream cheese as the base to create a variety of other flavorful cream cheese spreads. This Herbed Cashew Cream cheese is particularly good as is this delicious Pimento Cashew Cream Cheese .

For this recipe, culturing is done by adding a probiotic (i.e. healthy bacteria) to a thick cashew cream. The probiotic is what develops that sour and funky flavor and smell that you would recognize in yogurt and cheeses. Store-bought probiotics generally produce consistent results and are easy to work with, once you know what you are looking for. They come in either powder form or more commonly in capsules.

When purchasing your probiotics keep the following in mind:

If you're vegan, make sure they are vegan-friendly capsules. You are looking for probiotics that have active cultures (usually refrigerated), and you want as many as you can find — 3 billion to 10 billion cultures per capsule. Renew Life makes a pretty good probiotic which we have had good results with.

The powder/capsules may have a variety of other probiotic strains in it, but you want to make sure it includes *L. acidophilus*. Do not buy a probiotic that contains any strains of prebiotics as this can prevent the culturing from occurring.

For the capsules, open up the capsules and empty the contents, and measure as you would the powder. If the bottles seem like a lot, don't worry, many people also take probiotics orally to improve gut health.

This recipe was inspired by super talented Chad Sarno from Wicked Healthy Food.