

CASHEW CHEESE SPREAD

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I love easy recipes that seem more difficult while offering “wow” flavor! This delightfully versatile, make-ahead spread delivers. It can serve as a stand-alone appetizer with veggies or crackers, as a component of an appetizer, or as a condiment such as a sandwich spread.

Try a dollop on cucumber discs garnished with fresh herbs, or spread it onto grilled zucchini strips to create zucchini rolls. Or, create delicious tea sandwiches by pairing one of the flavor variations with a cucumber slice, fresh watercress, and/or smoked salmon.

Plan Ahead: The raw cashews require 8 - 24 hours of soaking prior to using in this recipe.

Makes: approximately 1 ½ cups spread

INGREDIENTS:

1 cup raw cashews, pre-soaked (see step 1)	2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
2 tablespoons nutritional yeast	2 tablespoons water (+ up to 2 additional tablespoons, if necessary)
1 ½ teaspoons red wine vinegar	1 tablespoon olive oil
¼ teaspoon garlic powder	¼ teaspoon Kosher salt
¼ teaspoon dry mustard	
1/8 teaspoon white pepper	

DIRECTIONS:

1. Place the raw cashews into a small mixing bowl and cover with cold water. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and place into the refrigerator to soak for 8 - 24 hours.
2. Drain the cashews thoroughly and place into the bowl of a food processor. Add the nutritional yeast, red wine vinegar, garlic powder, dry mustard and white pepper. Process until very smooth and creamy - stopping occasionally to scrape down the side of the bowl.
3. Add the lemon juice, water, olive oil and salt. Process further to fully incorporate.
NOTE: If making any flavor variations below, add the additional ingredients at this point.
4. Once fully combine and smooth, transfer spread to a covered container. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour, preferably 2 - 4, to allow flavors to blend and further develop.
5. To serve, transfer spread to desired serving dish and offer fresh vegetables, crackers, or bread alongside.

Flavor Variations:

- Roasted Red Pepper - add 2 chopped, roasted red peppers (fresh or from jar) + ¼ teaspoon smoked or sweet paprika.
- Harissa-Roasted Red Pepper - add 1 roasted red pepper + ½ - 1 teaspoon harissa (hot or mild; no added sugar variety)
- Dill - add ¼ cup fresh dill or 1 - 2 teaspoons dried
- Southwestern - add 1 - 2 teaspoons dried Southwestern seasoning blend
- Herb - add ¼ cup fresh herbs (single or combination) or 1 - 2 teaspoons dried herbs
- Zataar - add 1 ½ teaspoons zaatar seasoning