



Basic Cultured Cascheese (Fresh soft cheese & Aged firm cheese)

As well as what is contained in this kit you will need a spatula, a jar or container to culture the nut mix (at least 600ml), 120ml filtered, bottled or boiled and cooled water, salt, a measuring jug, spoons, a sieve or other means of straining the nuts, and a high-speed blender (you can use a food processor but the resulting cheese will be less smooth). Make sure all your tools and your work area are perfectly clean and sanitized.

Before you begin, clean and sterilize a jar/container large enough for your blended mix, at least a third of the container empty for the mix to breathe, once the cultures are added the mix is alive after all, that's what makes real cheese making so exciting! If oven sterilizing, allow to cool fully before use. Now let's begin

1. Soak your 400g nuts overnight in fridge, drain and give a 3 min soak in boiling water to kill any unwanted bacteria. Then rinse well under cold filtered or bottled water. If you have a powerful blender there is no need to soak overnight unless you want to!
2. Drain and add around 120ml of filtered or bottled water, blend until fully smooth and emulsified. Ensure the mix isn't warm before proceeding to the next step, allow to cool to room temperature if necessary. A hot mix could potentially kill the bacteria you'll be adding in the next step.
3. Transfer to a sterilized jar or container, add 4 micro spoonfuls of the starter culture to the blend and mix well.
4. Allow the mix to sit in a closed container for up to 48 hours at room temperature. Required time at this stage can vary depending on the ambient temperature, anything from 12-48 hours so be sure to check your mix a couple of times a day for activity, opening the jar will also allow the mix to breathe. You will be looking to observe some souring, sharpness, cheesiness to the taste and aroma, make sure you use a super clean spoon to taste. You may also notice some expansion in the mix, bubbles etc. All this indicates acidification of the mix and that culturing is happening! Your cheese is on its way!
5. Once your mix is ready, usually around the 24-hour mark, add a little salt, no more than $\frac{1}{2}$ a tsp to the mix and stir well, then transfer container to the fridge to firm up for at least a couple of hours. At this point you have a delicious fresh, soft cheese, you can add fresh or dried herbs, lemon, black pepper, garlic, sun dried tomatoes, whatever you fancy really. Boil a cheesecloth, wring out excess water and use it to line a sieve over a bowl. Transfer the mix smooth and sprinkle a little salt on top to help draw out excess moisture, leave like this in the fridge for 12 or so hours before transferring to a container, and enjoy for up to a week straight from the fridge.

6. Alternatively, if it's a firmer cheese you're after, boil your cheesecloths for a few minutes to sterilize, then drain and with scrupulously clean hands, wring out excess water. Carefully, and as flat as you can, line the moulds provided and split the mix between the moulds and press down and smooth as best you can. Sprinkle a tiny amount of salt over the top, as sparingly as you can, no more than $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp, and gently rub onto the surface, this is to help remove moisture, and also helps prevent any rogue bacteria growth.
7. Place on the sterilized cheese mat, in a loose lidded box in the warmest part of your fridge and flip the cheeses daily adding a little salt to the top as and when required. Replace cheesecloth if required, ensuring new cheesecloth is boiled to sterilize. Remove cheese from mould and cheesecloth once it is firm enough to handle and return to the box on the cheese mat provided. At this point you could get adventurous and coat in dried herbs, or a spice of your choosing, even use a brine with a little booze or balsamic vinegar to gently "wash" the surface every few days using a small piece of cheesecloth or even a clean pastry brush, OR you could just let it age naturally. Continue to flip daily.
8. The cheeses are ready when they are firm and have developed a rind of sorts. In a standard fridge this should take 2 -5 weeks. The longer you age, the more complex and stronger flavour you can achieve. Observation is key, don't be afraid to have a little taste!

TOP TIPS

- Use a paper towel to pat dry any excess moisture from the outside of your cheese.
- Use a paper towel to absorb any moisture build up inside the box, especially from the lid as this can drip onto the cheese.
- If your cheese is not drying remove the lid, or place lid on an angle to allow air flow.
- If your cheese is drying too fast and starting to crack, add a clean, damp sponge to the box.
- This is a super basic recipe and can be adapted in many ways to create beautiful and diverse cheeses. We would love to see your results, so please, if you are on socials, do tag us (@satsumapips) when you share your creations! For further advice and tips, we highly recommend joining Facebook groups "VEGAN CHEESE- Hits and Misses!" and "Cashewbert Cheese Making Group", also check out www.fullofplants.com. Full of plants also have lots of other cheese recipes to inspire you, and a free e book, so you can use all your left-over cultures experimenting with these once you've mastered the above recipe!

