

# The Exciting World of Vegan Cheese Part 2!

*With Amy & Amy*

Catch our next fabulous live show on May 29 at 7pm at the Ann Arbor District Library main branch!

And check out Amy Wright's blog at <https://michiganvegan.wordpress.com>

## Vegan Cheese: The Basics

**What is dairy cheese?** Milk protein (casein) plus stomach enzymes from animals (rennet), which coagulates/curdles the milk and creates a curd. Bacteria is added to cultured/aged cheeses. The curd is formed by the bonding of proteins and allows for different flavors and textures through aging.

**What is vegan cheese?** Plant-based proteins replace the dairy with plant-based emulsifiers and thickeners taking the place of rennet. The big difference is the curd. The proteins in plant-based cheese don't bond or modify, so the complex flavors are more difficult to develop. But vegan cheesemaking now utilizes bacterias and aging processes that produce cheese that look, smell, and taste close to the "real thing."

**What's in it?** Some common ingredients in commercial cheese are: proteins, oil, nutritional yeast, agar agar, nuts, starches, enzymes, and bacterial cultures. Homemade cheese ingredients can include: nuts, tofu, potatoes, agar agar, and non-dairy milks.

**Vegan cheese brands:** Daiya, Chao, Tofutti, Treeline, Heido Ho, Miyokos, Violife, Kite Hill, Herbivorous Butcher.

**Almost vegan cheese:** Some cheese looks vegan but isn't, so check the labels. Go Lightly, Almond brand, and Trader Joe's are lactose-free but still dairy.

**Will it melt?:** Yes! Many of the commercial cheese melt, not \*exactly\* like dairy, but still plenty for that ooey gooey cheese experience. Try Daiya on nachos and pizza! Chao, Violife, and the Herbivorous Butcher cheeses are all great options for a delicious grilled cheese. See below for a delicious homemade mac & cheese recipe.

**Nut/Soy/Gluten Allergies:** Many vegan cheeses contain these allergens. Check ingredients!

**Where can you find vegan cheese?:** Kroger has a good selection in their natural food section and Meijer has Diaya in their cheese section. Whole foods has numerous options, as do Arbor Farms, Fresh Thyme, Plum Market, and the A2 and Ypsi co-ops.

**Pizza with vegan cheese!:** Many places have it, including Pie Sci (Best Pizza Ever!), Buddy's, Blaze Pizza, Cottage Inn (Downtown Ann Arbor only), and Whole Foods. You can also find vegan frozen pizzas in many stores-- Look for Diaya and Amy's brands.

**Finding vegan cheese in the wild:** Besides most vegetarian and vegan places, you'll occasionally find vegan cheese in other restaurants, like the Wurst Bar in Ypsilanti, Ale Mary's, and Old Shillelagh.

# Vegan Cheesemaking

Making vegan cheese at home are as easy as combining a few ingredients or can be multi-day processes similar to dairy cheesemaking.

## 1. Cool Ingredients!

- Nutritional Yeast or Nooch
  - Deactivated yeast that tastes nutty, cheesy, and funky.
  - Comes in flakes or powder, found in the bulk aisle of most natural food stores or on Amazon/ other online stores.
  - Significant source of some B vitamins
  - Great on pizza, mashed and fried potatoes, scrambled tofu, pasta, popcorn etc.
- Agar Agar
- Raw Cashews
- Rejuvelac
- Miso- a fermented soybean paste from Japan. Available in Asian stores and natural food stores.
- Non Dairy Yogurt / margarine / milk
- Tofu
- Carrageenan
- Probiotics

**Quick Cheeses** come together in no time and use a protein like tofu or cashews and/or a sturdy vegetable like potatoes as a base. They are not fermented or aged, but the flavor combinations are similar to what you'd find in a dairy cheese. We use things like tahini and nutritional yeast (or "nooch") to give it a cheesy funk, garlic and mustard for flavor, and lemon juice for tang.

**Cultured cheeses** are more complicated, just like dairy cheese. The probiotics and lactic acid needed to culture the cheese can come from probiotics capsules, miso, rejuvelac, and even sauerkraut.

Cultured vegan cheese can be aged like dairy cheeses in a cool dry place or even the refrigerator.

## **Amy tested and approved recipes**

### **Make your own vegan cheese at home!**

#### **Too Gouda Be True**

- 8 ounces extra firm tofu
- 2 peeled, cooked yellow or white potatoes
- 2 tsp tahini
- ½ tsp smoked paprika
- 1 T prepared mustard
- 1½ T nutritional yeast
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ tsp garlic powder
- 2 tablespoons vegan butter (Earth Balance is one brand)
- ⅓ cup non dairy milk
- 1½ T agar agar powder (not flakes)
- 1½ tsp lemon juice

#### **Instructions:**

- Grease molds with olive oil. You will need about 4 cupcake sized tins, ramekins, ceramic or glass containers. Add any herbs you like, salt, or pepper if you like-- these will be on top when you take the cheese out of the molds.
- Add all ingredients except butter, milk, and agar and agar to food processor or blender and mix until smooth. Add more seasonings to taste.
- In a small pan, heat the milk and butter over medium heat. When the butter has melted, add the agar agar, stirring constantly, for about 6 minutes. If the mixture begins to coagulate, add splashes of milk so that it is a very thick sauce.
- Pour the milk mixture into the blender with the potatoes and tofu and blend.

- Pour the mixture into prepared molds. Let cool to room temperature for 10 minutes and then refrigerate for at least 30 minutes before serving. To serve, tip cheese out of molds and serve with crackers, pretzels, etc. Or slice and use for grilled cheese.

### **Amy's Famous Cheese Ball**

- One container of Kite Hill cream cheese
- One bag of Daiya shredded cheddar, chopped
- Three green onions, chopped
- A few dashes of liquid smoke, if you're feeling fancy

Mix together for a cheese dip or roll in chopped nuts or coconut bacon for a cheese ball

### **Garlic and Dill cheese:**

<https://minimalistbaker.com/garlic-herb-vegan-cheese/>

### **Herby Potato & Carrot Cheese:**

<http://www.onegreenplanet.org/vegan-recipe/potato-and-carrot-cheese/>

### **Nacho Cheese:**

<https://minimalistbaker.com/vegan-mexican-cheese-three-ways/>

### **Mac & Cheese:**

<http://vegnews.com/articles/page.do?pageId=40&catId=10>

*Resource: <http://www.organicauthority.com/foodie-buzz/what-is-vegan-cheese-made-of.html>*