

Veggie Cracker

This is a tasty and attractive vegetarian option for Christmas dinner or other special meals. Leeks are in season from autumn to late winter so they are ideal here, but this recipe also works with courgettes. Delicious when served with all the traditional festive trimmings, especially cranberries.



Cashew nuts, milk, sulphites and wheat (gluten)*

Nutritional information per portion (229g):

Energy	Fat	Saturates	Sugars	Salt
1197kJ 285kcal 14%	18g 26%	4.1g 20%	3.3g 4%	0.52g 9%

of an adult's reference intake.
Typical values per 100g: energy 523kJ/124kcal.

Equipment

Weighing scales
Baking tray
Small bowl x 2
Pastry brush
Frying pan
Wooden spoon
Chopping board
Sharp knife
Kitchen roll
Scissors
Zip-seal bag
Rolling pin (optional)
Saucepan and steamer
Measuring spoons
Pan stand
Oven gloves

Ingredients

Serves 4
Oil for greasing
80g cashew nuts
4 small OR 2 large leeks
150g mushrooms
Small bunch (10g) fresh parsley
8 x 5ml spoons vegetable oil
100g reduced-fat garlic and herb soft cheese
4 sheets filo pastry

*Presence of allergens can vary by brand – always check product labels. If you serve food outside the home you must make allergen information available when asked.



Top Tips

- If you choose to make the crackers with courgettes, follow the method in exactly the same way.
- Choose the size of leeks (or courgettes) carefully to fit the filo sheets.
- Any spare parts of leeks can be saved for making soup or stock.
- You could skip toasting the cashew nuts, but it's well worth doing it if you have time.

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Method

1. Preheat the oven to 190°C/170°C fan or gas mark 5. Grease the baking tray.
2. Toast the nuts by gently dry frying them for a minute or two until golden, moving them around with the wooden spoon constantly as they can burn easily. Remove and leave to cool.
3. Wash the leeks and cut off the roots and the tops – you need to end up with 4 pieces of leek that will each fit your filo pastry sheets with at least 5cm to spare at each end. If using large leeks you can slice them in half across (not lengthways) and get two pieces from each leek.
4. Wipe the mushrooms with damp kitchen roll to remove any dirt or grit and slice finely. Remove the stalks from the parsley and chop the leaves. An easy way for children to do this is to cut it up inside a cup using scissors.
5. Put the cooled nuts into the zip-seal bag and crush with a wooden spoon or rolling pin, leaving some small chunks.
6. Steam the leeks for approximately 5 minutes, or until they become soft. Leave the leeks to cool.
7. Meanwhile, heat 2 x 5ml spoons of oil in the frying pan and fry the mushrooms over a medium heat with the crushed cashew nuts. After 4 minutes add the parsley, stir through, then remove from the heat and leave to cool.
8. Cut the leeks in half lengthways, spread the soft cheese down the middle of the leek then sandwich the halves back together.
9. Measure 6 x 5ml spoons of oil into a small bowl.
10. Lay 1 sheet of filo pastry out on a flat surface and cut it in half with the scissors. Brush oil sparingly over the first half and then place the second half on top of the first and brush that with oil.
11. Place the leek at one side of the pastry, making sure to leave a space at both ends. Spoon a strip of mushroom mixture down one side of the leek.
12. Carefully roll the leek so that it is covered in the pastry. Pinch and twist both ends of the pastry tube to resemble a cracker. Repeat the process for the remaining 3 leeks.
13. Place the crackers on the prepared baking tray and brush with any remaining oil. Bake for 20 minutes until lightly golden. Serve immediately, handling the fragile pastry with care.

Something to try next time

- Use pumpkin seeds rather than cashew nuts if you're cooking for someone who is allergic to nuts.
- For Christmas day, add a few dried cranberries to the mushroom and nut filling.

Prepare now, eat later

- The crackers can be prepared in advance to the end of step 12 and frozen to save time later. Simply pack in a rigid container and then thaw in the fridge overnight before following the cooking instructions in step 13.

Skills used include:

Weighing, washing, measuring, chopping, crushing, frying, steaming and baking.