Cheese Basics

Shop and Save

☆ Watch for sale prices and coupons.
☆ Compare cost per ounce to decide which package is the best buy.
☆ Sliced or grated cheese may cost more than cheese in a block.
☆ Check the Best if Used By date and select a package size that you can use while the cheese is at its best quality.
☆ Avoid cheese that looks dry or cracked.

Cheese Math

1 cup shredded cheese = 4 ounces

More About Cheese

☆ Some cheeses are made with mold that is safe to eat (Brie, Camembert or blue cheese). Mold that is not part of the cheese-making process can cause illness. If you see mold on sliced, shredded, crumbled or soft cheese, throw away all of the cheese. On firm cheeses, like Cheddar or Swiss, cut away at least an inch around and under the mold you can see. The remaining cheese is safe to eat.
☆ Processed cheeses (American cheese, cheese spreads) are made of natural cheeses mixed with other ingredients.
☆ You can choose cheese with fewer calories from fat. Reduced fat cheese has 25% less fat than the original natural cheese. Low fat cheese has no more than 3 grams of fat per ounce. They may taste and cook differently than the original natural cheese.
☆ Non-dairy cheeses made with soy or nuts are available but may not taste or cook the same as dairy cheese. They may also contain different nutrients.

Store Well

☆ Store cheese in the refrigerator. Soft cheeses may only keep for a week. The harder the cheese, the longer it can be stored.
☆ Cover cheese to prevent it from drying out. Wrap with plastic wrap or use an airtight container. Shredded cheeses store best in the original packaging or re-closable plastic bags.
☆ Firmer cheeses can be frozen, but the texture will become crumbly. Grate before freezing and divide into recipe-sized amounts. Thaw just the amount you need in the refrigerator and use for cooking.
**Cooking with Cheese**

**Broccoli Cheddar Soup**

**Ingredients:**
- 1 cup onion, chopped
- 1 cup carrot, shredded
- 1½ teaspoons margarine or butter
- 2 cups broth, any flavor
- 2 cups broccoli, chopped (fresh or frozen)
- 1 cup nonfat or 1% milk
- ¼ cup flour
- 4 ounces (1 cup) shredded reduced fat cheddar cheese
- ½ teaspoon pepper

**Directions:**
1. In a medium saucepan over medium-high heat, sauté onion and carrot in margarine or butter until onions begin to brown. Add broth and broccoli. Simmer until broccoli is tender, 5 to 7 minutes.
2. In another container, slowly stir the milk into the flour until smooth. Stir the milk mixture into the soup. Bring to a boil and continue stirring until slightly thickened, 3 to 5 minutes.
3. Add cheese and pepper. Heat over low heat until cheese is melted. Serve hot.
4. Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours.

**Makes** 4 cups  
**Prep time:** 10-15 minutes  
**Cook time:** 15 minutes

**Making Quesadillas**
- Choose the filling: shredded cheese plus fruit, veggies, fish, meat or beans.
- Layer filling on a tortilla; cover with another tortilla or fold in half.
- Warm until the cheese melts. Use a skillet, griddle, oven or grill.
- Serve ‘as is’ or with a fruit or veggie salsa.

Try these recipes from FoodHero.org:
- Veggie Quesadillas with Cilantro Yogurt Dip
- Turkey Cranberry Quesadilla
  - Tuna Quesadilla
  - Pear Quesadilla

**Skillet Mac and Cheese**

**Ingredients:**
- 2 cups water
- 1½ cups uncooked macaroni
- 1 teaspoon margarine or butter
- 2 Tablespoons flour
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon dry mustard
- 1¼ cups nonfat or 1% milk
- 1¼ cups (5 ounces) grated cheddar cheese

**Directions:**
1. In a 10-inch non-stick skillet or medium saucepan, bring water to a boil.
2. Add the macaroni and margarine or butter. Stir a few times to prevent sticking.
3. Cover the pan and reduce heat to low. Simmer for 5 minutes. (Do not drain the water.)
5. Remove the lid and cook macaroni until most of the water is gone.
6. Stir and add milk mixture and cheese. Mix well. Cook and stir until all the cheese melts and the sauce is bubbly and thick.
7. Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours.

**Note:** Add your favorite fresh or frozen vegetables in step 2. Try onions, celery, carrots, zucchini or others.

**Makes** 4 cups  
**Prep time:** 10 minutes  
**Cook time:** 20 minutes

When kids help make healthy food, they are more likely to try it. Show kids how to:
- grate cheese with a box grater.
- measure and mix ingredients.
- sprinkle cheese and filling on tortillas.
- cut quesadillas with a pizza cutter.