

Vegan Cashew Nacho Cheese Sauce

The Zone @ UCSD

Ingredients

- 1 Tbsp oil (coconut, olive, avocado, canola)
- 1.5 c cashews, soaked* (see directions)
- 3 cups liquid (cashew-soaking water, almond milk, dairy milk, chicken or vegetable stock)
- 1 medium sweet potato, thin sliced and diced
- 1/2 red onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 c nutritional yeast (*NOT Brewer's yeast)
- 1 tsp chili powder
- 1 tsp cumin
- 1 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp pepper
- 1 can Rotel (medium spice), or chunky salsa

(Optional Ingredients)

- 1 tsp onion powder
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- 1/2 tsp smoked paprika
- 1/2 tsp cayenne
- Protein of choice

Directions:

1. Soak cashews for ≥ 1 hour in water, to soften.
2. Over medium heat, heat oil in a large saucepan or pot. Add in onion and garlic and sauté until slightly brown and fragrant. Add in chili powder, cumin, salt, pepper, and additional spices if desired, and stir. Add in cashews, sweet potato, nutritional yeast, and sauté for 5 minutes to slightly caramelize sweet potato and cashews. Add in liquid, stir well, and cover pot.
3. Reduce heat to medium-low to sustain a simmer, and allow ingredients to cook for ~20 minutes, stirring occasionally to ensure nothing is sticking to the bottom of the pot. Once sweet potato and cashews have softened, turn off heat and allow mixture to cool for 5 minutes.
4. Next, ladle mixture into food processor or blender. Place lid on blender or food processor, venting slightly to allow for steam escape, but holding firmly in place to prevent eruption of contents. Slowly increase blend speed, stopping to add more liquid if mixture is too thick. When blender/food processor is in the OFF position, test flavor and add more salt if desired. Continue blending until ingredients form a smooth puree, then pour mixture back into the pot.
5. Stir Rotel into mixture.
 - **Optional additional protein:** If desired, add a cooked protein of choice to the mixture during step 5. Tasty options include ground meats cooked in taco seasoning, boiled shrimp or seafood, drained and spiced beans, tempeh, or baked/smoked tofu.
6. Serve as desired! Delicious as a dip with tortilla chips, as a cheese sauce for nachos, or as a sauce over pasta or vegetables.

