Prep Time: 20 minutes
Chill Time: 1 hour
Bake Time: 15–18 minutes
Total Time: 1 hour 40 minutes

There is something undeniably magical about transforming a block of sharp cheddar and a little flour into a batch of crispy, golden crackers. While store-bought versions are convenient, they often lack the robust, tangy punch of real cheese and contain preservatives you don't need. These Homemade Cheese Crackers are the perfect solution. They are buttery, intensely savory, and have that satisfying "snap" that makes them impossible to stop eating.

Whether you are serving them at a dinner party with a charcuterie board, packing them for a lunchbox, or simply enjoying them as a midnight snack, these crackers deliver. We will use extra-sharp cheddar to maximize the flavor profile, and a touch of smoked paprika to add a subtle warmth.

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Ingredients

The Dry Base:

- 1 ½ cups (180g) all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt (plus extra for finishing)
- ½ teaspoon smoked paprika (optional, for depth)
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder (optional)

The Fat & Flavor:

- 8 tablespoons (113g) unsalted butter, cold and cubed
- 8 ounces (225g) extra-sharp cheddar cheese, shredded (freshly grated is best—avoid pre-shredded cheese with anti-caking agents)

The Binder:

- 2–3 tablespoons ice-cold water

Method

Phase 1: The Dough Formation (Time: 10 Minutes | Intensity: Medium)

1. Prep the Dry Ingredients:
In the bowl of a food processor (or a large mixing bowl if doing this by hand), combine the flour, salt, smoked paprika, and garlic powder. Pulse a few times to aerate and mix.

2. Incorporate the Butter:
Add the cold, cubed butter. If using a food processor, pulse until the mixture resembles coarse sand with some pea-sized butter chunks remaining. If working by hand, use a pastry cutter or your fingertips to rub the butter into the flour. Intensity Check: You want to stop before the dough becomes a paste; visible flecks of butter are good for flakiness.

3. Add the Cheese:
Add the shredded cheddar cheese. Pulse (or stir) until the cheese is evenly distributed and the mixture looks like a coarse, cheesy crumble.

4. Hydrate:
Sprinkle 1 tablespoon of ice water over the mixture at a time. Pulse (or stir) just until the dough begins to clump together and hold its shape when pinched. Do not over-process. Intensity Check: If the dough feels dry, add the remaining water, one teaspoon at a time. It should be soft but not sticky.

Phase 2: Chilling (Time: 1 Hour | Intensity: Low)

5. Form the Disc:
Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface. Knead it gently 2–3 times just to bring it together into a ball. Flatten the ball into a thick disc (about 1 inch thick). Wrap it tightly in plastic wrap.

6. Rest:
Refrigerate for at least 1 hour. Why? This is crucial. Chilling solidifies the butter, which prevents the crackers from spreading too much in the oven and ensures a flaky texture. It also allows the flour to hydrate, making the dough easier to roll.

Phase 3: Rolling and Shaping (Time: 10 Minutes | Intensity: High)

7. Preheat:
Preheat your oven to 350°F (175°C). Line two baking sheets with parchment paper.

8. Roll Out:
Remove the dough from the fridge. Cut the disc in half (keeping one half in the fridge while you work). On a lightly floured surface, roll the dough out to a thickness of ⅛ inch (about 3mm). Intensity Check: You want to roll this as evenly as possible. If some parts are thicker than others, they will bake unevenly.

9. Cut:
Using a sharp knife, a pizza cutter, or a small cookie cutter, cut the dough into 1-inch squares or shapes. Use a spatula to transfer the crackers to the prepared baking sheet, leaving about ½ inch of space between them.

10. Dock (Optional):
Using a toothpick or a skewer, poke a hole in the center of each cracker. This helps steam escape and keeps the crackers flat.

Phase 4: Baking and Finishing (Time: 15–18 Minutes | Intensity: High)

11. Bake:
Bake one sheet at a time in the middle of the oven for 15–18 minutes. Intensity Check: Watch closely after the 12-minute mark. You want the edges to be golden brown and the centers to be slightly darker than the raw dough. If you pull them out too early, they will be chewy rather than crispy.

12. Season and Cool:
Let the crackers cool on the baking sheet for 5 minutes. While still warm, sprinkle with a little extra flakey sea salt if desired. Transfer to a wire rack to cool completely. They will crisp up further as they cool.

Recipe Notes

- Cheese Variety: Sharp cheddar is the classic choice, but you can experiment with Gruyère, Parmesan, or a spicy Pepper Jack.
- Storage: Store in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 5 days. If they lose their crunch, pop them back in a 300°F oven for 5 minutes.
- Freezing: You can freeze the dough logs for up to 3 months. Slice and bake straight from frozen (adding 2–3 minutes to the bake time).

Nutrition (Approximate)

Serving Size: 5 Crackers (based on a yield of 60 crackers)

- Calories: 120
- Total Fat: 9g (Saturated Fat: 5g)

- Cholesterol: 24mg
- Sodium: 180mg
- Total Carbohydrates: 7g (Dietary Fiber: 0.3g, Sugars: 0.1g)
- Protein: 4g