

# Almond Feta Cheese

*Swick*

Makes 1 cups | Active Time: 30 minutes | Total Time: 24 hours

## Step 1: Soaking the Almonds

- 1 cup whole (or slivered) blanched almonds
- The first step is to soak the almonds. To do this, simply place them into a bowl and cover with 2 to 3 inches of water. Let soak for a couple of hours, or even overnight. Drain and rinse.

Note: Fermenting the almonds by either using a probiotic or letting them soak for a few days (changing the water daily) will result in tangier feta.

## Step 2: Making the Feta

- 2 cloves garlic, minced\*
- 4 to 5 tbsp fresh lemon juice
- 3 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 1/2 tsp fleur de sel, or to taste

To make the feta, add the nuts to your machine and blend until you reach a somewhat paste-like consistency — then add the garlic and blend again. Next, add the lemon juice and olive oil, and salt and blend until smooth. If using a food processor that is not as powerful as a Robot Coupe, follow the same process; however, if it doesn't seem to be blending well enough, add a touch of water (less is more) and continue to blend until you reach the smoothest consistency you can get.

A Few Notes:

For the lemon juice, the amount will vary, depending on your personal preference. Like with 'traditional' feta, the flavors and tartness vary between all the different types and brands of feta available. Start with 4 tablespoons and then go from there — if you like nice tart feta, add a bit more lemon juice.

For the salt, we used a nice clean fleur de sel, but you can experiment to see what works for you. Note that the amount of salt needed will depend on the type of salt used and personal preference. That being said, feta is typically meant to be a bit on the salty side.

For blending the feta, it is best to use a high-powered Robot Coupe, such as this Blixer; however, if you do not have one, a high-speed blender or food processor can be used instead. In this case, you will likely need to add water to the mixture to help it blend.

Also, note that if you don't use the Robot Coupe, you will most likely need to strain the mixture in cheesecloth afterward to remove the excess liquid. To do this, scrape the nut mixture into a strainer lined with a piece of cheesecloth or a mesh bag. Draw the strings of the bag and twist it to secure it. Place a small plate over the cheese and press to flatten it out a bit. Next place a heavyweight, such as a bowl of dried beans or a large can, onto the plate. The weight will help to press out any excess water, which will ultimately determine the firmness of the cheese. Cover everything with a clean cloth or breathable piece of mesh and let drain overnight.

## Step 3: Baking the Feta

To bake the feta, start by preheating the oven to 200°F (93°C).

Next, the feta can either be formed into a ball, formed into a flat rectangle, or it can be formed into individual slabs (more like traditional feta).

To form the feta into slabs, the easiest method is to evenly spread the feta onto the bottom of a baking tray or casserole dish that has been very lightly sprayed with oil. The mixture should be about an inch or so thick. Then using a non-stick flexible spatula that has been lightly sprayed with oil section the feta into 4 slabs. Then, working with a clean spatula, that has been sprayed with non-stick spray, confidently lift up each slab and place it onto a parchment-lined baking tray. Use the back of the spatula to very gently flatten and roughly even out each slab as you place them onto the baking tray. Don't press the mixture too much as a few air pockets look nice once baked, they sort of looks like the little cracks and holes you would see in 'traditional' feta.

Once formed, place the mixture onto a parchment-lined baking tray and bake for approximately 30 minutes and then carefully flip each piece over and bake again for another 10 to 20 minutes.

Ultimately, the cooking time will depend on your oven, how the feta is going to be used, and/or how creamy/firm you want the feta to be in the end. If you are going brine the feta, it's best if it's a bit firmer, rather than super creamy and soft.

Once done, remove the feta from the oven and let cool before using. If brining the feta, allow it to cool completely before proceeding.

## Step 4: Brining the Feta | Optional

- 1 tsp fleur de sel
- 1/2 cup warm water\*
- 1/2 cup non-dairy unsweetened milk

While brining the feta is optional, it does add a nice salty punch to the feta. It also helps to preserve it and prevent it from drying out.

The amount of salt will depend on how salty the feta is to start with, how salty you want it to be in the end, and where and how you are using the feta—as a part of a filling, as a spread, on a salad, etc.

For the liquid, either all water or all non-dairy milk can be used—we prefer the combination of the two. To make the brine, dissolve the salt into the water and then add the non-dairy milk. Let cool completely before adding the feta.

Lastly, add the feta to a tall jar or container and then gently pour the brine over the feta. The feta should be fully submerged, if not, add a touch more water.

Refrigerate the feta for a few hours, or preferably overnight. The feta will keep for a few days in the refrigerator. Note that it will soften the longer it's in the brine.

This feta goes really well with many salads, in particular, Greek salad as well as this Bulgur Spinach Salad but it can also be used with many other dishes. For example, the feta is great as part of the filling for these Spanakopitas.