

# CRANBERRY-PECAN CHEESE CRACKERS

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I serve these delicious crackers in so many ways. When I prepare a cheese platter for a cocktail party, I always include a heaping pile on the platter. A few crackers alongside a salad serve as a substitute for croutons. These jeweled discs compliment any soup, but I especially like them with cream soups, tomato soup and my recently posted blog, pumpkin soup. In the 'ber' months, (months ending in 'ber') I keep a cookie jar filled with these bejeweled crackers on the kitchen counter to provide an afternoon snack.



For such a simple snack, they appeal to all of my senses. The extra sharp Cheddar cheese provides the delicious taste. The slight hint of heat from the cayenne lingers for a moment after you swallow the cracker. The pecans offer a nutty crunch while the cranberries, which look like jewels, are sweet and chewy.

## Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 cups chopped pecans
- 1 1/2 cups chopped sweetened dried cranberries
- 2 cups unsalted butter, softened
- 1 1/2 teaspoons salt
- 1 1/2 teaspoons cayenne pepper
- 4 cups extra sharp Cheddar cheese, shredded
- 4 cups all-purpose flour

Toast pecans on a dry frying pan or single layer in a shallow baking pan in the oven until fragrant. Be careful not to burn the pecans as they will become bitter. Set aside until completely cooled. Soak the cranberries in boiling water for about 15 minutes. Drain, pat dry and cool before adding the cranberries. In a bowl, beat softened butter, salt and cayenne pepper. Add cheese and blend until creamy. Gradually add flour mixing just until combined. Stir in cranberries and pecans. Divide the dough into 4 pieces and roll each piece to form a log approximately 2" in diameter. Wrap the logs in plastic wrap and chill for at least 8 hours or up to 3 days.

To bake the cheese crackers, preheat oven to 350°. Remove the cheese logs from the refrigerator and cut into 1/4" discs. Place the discs onto a baking pan lined with a Silpat or parchment paper. Bake 13 – 15 minutes or until lightly browned. Remove from baking sheets and cool on wire rack. Stored in an airtight container, these cheese wafers last for months.