Making Vegan Cheese at Home

One of the main downsides to vegan or plant-based cheeses, especially the more healthful fermented options, is that they are expensive. An excellent way of cutting costs is to make your own. Vegan cheeses are typically made from plant-based ingredients such as nuts, seeds, soy, or starches, often combined with nutritional yeast, spices, and sometimes probiotics for fermentation. Here are three recipes to help you create your own vegan cheese at home: fermented cream cheese, a firm, sliceable cheese, and a creamy cheese sauce.

Fermented Vegan Cream Cheese

This rich and tangy cream cheese is made using cashews and probiotics, giving it a cultured flavor. Replace the lemon juice with 1 teaspoon of citric acid, if desired. Feel free to add herbs and spices such as dill, chives, parsley, garlic, onion powder, cayenne pepper, black pepper, or herb mixes. Cream cheese freezes well.

Ingredients:

- 2 cups raw cashews (soaked in water for 4-6 hours or overnight)
- 3/4 cup water
- 2 probiotic capsules (vegan-friendly)
- 3/4 tsp salt (optional)
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice (optional, for extra tang)

Instructions:

1. Drain the soaked cashews, and rinse in fresh water.
2. Blend cashews with 3/4 cup water in a high-speed blender until completely smooth.

3. Open the probiotic capsule and sprinkle the powder into the cashew mixture (discard the capsule shell). Blend again to combine.
4. Transfer the mixture to a clean glass jar or bowl, cover it with a breathable cloth, and let it ferment in a warm room for 24-48 hours. The longer it ferments, the tangier it will become. If your home is cool, you can put the cheese in a dehydrator at the lowest temperature.
5. Once fermented, stir in sea salt and lemon juice to taste. Store the cream cheese in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 7 days.

