



## Lady Helen's Cheese Straws

*This recipe adapted from the cookbook, *Cooking up a Storm*, was sent to the newspaper by Marianne Hayden-Whitmore, and it belonged to the late Lady Helen Hardy of New Orleans. You can make them with or without a cookie press. If using a cookie press, choose a bleached all-purpose flour, whereas an unbleached flour provides more structure and you are able to bake these without a cookie press by just cutting the dough into strips with a pizza cutter. The baking powder provides lightness, essential if using the cookie press, but if you want to omit it, then you will bake an even older version of cheese straws and more crispy like pie crust. I have slightly adapted Lady Helen's recipe by baking at a little higher temperature (she used 300 degrees F).*

Makes about 5 dozen

- 15 to 16 ounces extra-sharp Cheddar cheese
  - 12 tablespoons (1 1/2 sticks) unsalted butter or margarine, at room temperature
  - 2 cups all-purpose flour
  - 1 teaspoon baking powder, if desired
  - 1 teaspoon ground cayenne pepper
  - 1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon salt
  - 5 to 6 good dashes of Tabasco hot sauce
1. Shred the cheese using a cheese grater (need 4 lightly packed cups) and place in the bowl of a large stand mixer or food processor. Add the soft butter. Toss the flour with the baking powder, if using, cayenne pepper, and salt. Add to the bowl. Add the hot sauce. Mix or process until the mixture comes together in a ball, about 1 to 2 minutes.
  2. Press down on the ball gently, wrap in waxed paper, and place in the refrigerator to chill 30 minutes.
  3. When ready to bake, preheat the oven to 350 degrees, and set aside two or three ungreased baking sheets. Remove the dough from the fridge, and cut the ball in half. Return one wrapped half to the fridge. Place the other half on a lightly floured work surface. Roll out the dough to 1/4-inch thickness. With a pastry cutter or pizza wheel, cut the dough into 1/2-inch strips and gently transfer them to a baking sheet. Place one pan at a time in the oven, and bake until the straws are puffed up and golden brown, 15 to 20 minutes. With a metal spatula, transfer the cheese straws to a wire rack to cool completely. Repeat with the remaining dough. (Or, you can freeze the unbaked dough up to 1 month.)

4. Serve the cheese straws warm with cocktails. Or let them cool and store in airtight tins for up to 1 week at room temperature or up to 3 months in the freezer.

**Lady Helen's Cookie Press instructions:** Use a scant 2 cups bleached all-purpose flour and the baking powder in making the dough. Place the dough in a cookie press, and squeeze out rows the entire length of the cookie sheet, spacing them at least 1/2-inch apart. Bake 10 minutes at 300 degrees F. Lower the temperature to 225 degrees and bake until straw-colored but not browned, about 15 minutes. If you think they are browning too fast, open the oven door. Allow 2 to 3 minutes before the end of the baking time, and with a small sharp knife, cut the straws crosswise into shorter strips.