

## Teese Vegan "Cheese" (Vegan, Nut-Free)

By Hannah Kaminsky, My Sweet Vegan ~ Its official: The final frontier of veganism has been reached. Dairy and casein-free cheese, that illusive substance that has typically tasted like burnt plastic at best, is now just as good, if not better than the original animal product. And this time, it really melts- Not just sort of, if you coddle it and sing it sweet songs while it stews for an hour- But throw it under a broiler and it becomes gooey, creamy, and everything one could hope for in any sort of cheese. Teese, the newest kid on the "cheese"-making block, has taken the vegan world by storm, showing up in innumerable commercial restaurants and homes alike. I'm actually a bit late to this party, as you can find reviews of this stuff all over the place, but I just had to check it out for myself anyways ...

Arriving in the shape of a plump sausage, wrapped up tightly in red plastic, I must admit I was a bit dubious at first. Knowing full well that it would be good after reading so many rave reviews, it was just a matter of getting past the packaging to focus on the savory goodness that lay within. Peeling back the faux casing, I was struck by how genuinely cheesy it smelled! I don't know what else I was expecting, but it stopped me dead in my tracks, and I simply couldn't decide what to do with it first. Not wanting to go with the pizza route since everyone and their mother had already done so, I quickly defrosted a package of puff pastry and made a similar, but different concoction.

While I may have ended up with a bit more pastry than intended, there wasn't a single flaw with the filling. Combined with a simple dice of roasted red peppers and fresh herbs, the Teese took on a delightfully soft, gooey texture. Mild but with a good hit of salt, it was everything one might expect from your average mozzarella. Grating easily to the point of mush, I tossed the remaining brick into the freezer after this first experiment. For a more user-friendly consistency, I would suggest storing it there regardless of its final destination.

Next, I knew I would really be pushing it by going against all wisdom of working with faux cheeses: Eating it raw. Every time I tried unadulterated "cheese" products previously, my taste buds rebelled so severely that you would have thought I was eating oil-soaked rubber. Hoping that it would be different with the magical Teese, I whipped up a quick caprese salad (Note: This was before the recent tomato recall, in case you were wondering!)

Most surprising of my entire trial was how tasty this stuff was with just a drizzle of olive oil, accompanied by sliced tomatoes and basil fresh from the garden. An excellent platter to start off a meal with, even my omnivorous mom agreed that it was quite palatable! Her thoughts were that it tasted like low-fat (dairy) cheese, as it had a lighter texture, and wasn't quite as smooth or dense. Talk about impressive!

Finally, there were ravioli, one of my childhood favorites. I cheated a bit by using wonton wrappers as the pasta, but really, it's pretty tough to screw up when you have such an amazing filling. Just some grated tease, herbs, salt, and pepper created the innards, and I had an incredibly delicious meal in mere minutes. You could also thin it out a bit and add more protein by mashing in some tofu, but this stuff does wonders on its own. Seriously, do I even need to tell you how amazing it was?

If you've been holding out on buying Teese due to bad faux cheese experiences in the past, but are craving melty, irresistible cheesy decadence, what are you waiting for? Go order a pound or two of this, right now!