

Cheese Straws

Serves 6 (Makes 13 straws) **MAKE AHEAD** **VEGETARIAN**

Total Time 45 minutes

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS Crisp, salty cheese straws are quick to disappear from a party platter. We kept things simple by using store-bought frozen puff pastry, which bakes up buttery and flaky. To incorporate as much bold cheese flavor as possible, we grated nutty Parmesan, sprinkled a substantial layer over our thawed puff pastry, and then used a rolling pin to firmly press the cheese into the pastry. Incorporating a bit of parsley into the cheese filling added some visual interest to our straws, as did twisting them into corkscrew shapes before baking. To thaw frozen puff pastry, let it stand either in the refrigerator for 24 hours or on the counter for 30 minutes to 1 hour.

- 1 (9 by 9½-inch) sheet frozen puff pastry, thawed
- 2 ounces Parmesan or aged Asiago cheese, grated (1 cup)
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh parsley
- ¼ teaspoon table salt
- ⅛ teaspoon pepper

1. Adjust oven racks to upper-middle and lower-middle positions; heat oven to 425 degrees. Line rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper. Lay puff pastry on second sheet of parchment and sprinkle with Parmesan, parsley, salt, and pepper. Top with third sheet of parchment. Using rolling pin, press cheese mixture into pastry, then roll pastry into 10-inch square.

2. Remove top sheet of parchment and cut pastry into thirteen ¾-inch-wide strips with sharp knife or pizza wheel. Gently twist each strip of pastry and space about ½ inch apart on prepared baking sheet. (Cheese straws can be made through step 2, thoroughly chilled, gently wrapped in aluminum foil, and frozen for up to 1 month. Do not thaw before baking. It may be necessary to add a few minutes to the baking time.)

3. Bake on top rack until straws are fully puffed and golden brown, about 10 minutes, switching baking sheet to bottom rack halfway through baking. Let cheese straws cool completely on baking sheet. (Cheese straws can be wrapped in plastic wrap and stored at room temperature for up to 24 hours before serving.)

Everything Straws

Omit Parmesan, parsley, salt, and pepper. Sprinkle dough with 2½ teaspoons Everything Bagel Blend (page 234) in step 1.



Horseradish and Grainy Mustard Straws

Omit Parmesan, parsley, salt, and pepper. Combine 2 tablespoons prepared horseradish, well drained, and 2 tablespoons whole-grain mustard in small bowl. Substitute horseradish mixture for Parmesan mixture.

Olive, Feta, and Oregano Cheese Straws

Omit Parmesan, parsley, salt, and pepper. Combine ½ cup kalamata olives, pitted and chopped fine; ¼ cup crumbled feta; and 1 tablespoon minced fresh oregano in small bowl. Substitute olive mixture for Parmesan mixture.

Fines Herbes Straws

Omit Parmesan, parsley, salt, and pepper. Combine 1 tablespoon minced fresh parsley, 1 tablespoon minced fresh chervil, 1 tablespoon minced fresh tarragon, 1 tablespoon minced fresh chives, ¼ teaspoon table salt, and ⅛ teaspoon pepper in small bowl. Substitute herb mixture for Parmesan mixture.