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- In a hurry? We've covered you. Cream cheese is a soft, fresh, creamy cheese used in dips, sauces, and pastries, and as a spread. It is often combined with other ingredients, especially in recipes such as jalapeño poppers, cheesecake, cream cheese danishes, cakes or pound cake, cream cheese glaze, or stews such as creamy enchiladas. Whether you use it to smear on bagels or to bake a masterpiece, it's good to know how to soften it. Cream cheese is available in different forms. Whipped cream cheese found in a bathtub is already soft, but the standard block has a very smooth texture and is very dense and sticky. There is also sometimes wrapped in plastic and can be a bit crumbly and lighter. Just like butter, when cream cheese is cold, it can be difficult to spread or combine with other ingredients. The easiest way to soften cream cheese is to let it get to room temperature, but it can take an hour to two, depending on the temperature of your kitchen and the amount of cream cheese you soften. Do not leave it outside the refrigerator for more than three hours or it may spoil. If you don't have time to let it get to room temperature, there are two other ways to quickly and easily soften cream cheese. You can beat cream cheese with a blender or food processor or heat it up slightly in hot water or a microwave. You can also use these techniques to soften Neufchâtel which is a low-fat cheese that is very similar and often interchangeable with cream cheese. Add a couple of teaspoons of milk to an 8-ounce block of cream cheese, and beat it in a food processor, or in a bowl with a hand blender or in the bowl of a standing blender. This method should only take a minute. To microwave cream cheese, unpack it and place it in a microwave-safe container. Microwave it for 15 to 20 seconds. You don't want to cook cream cheese, so check if it's soft after 15 seconds, and add more time in small steps only if needed. If you prefer to refrain from microwave (or if you do not have one) you can achieve the same results with warm water. Place the cream cheese in a zip-top bag, and completely drown the sealed bag in a bowl of warm water. You may need to put something heavy on top of the bag to keep it submerged, like a smaller bowl. Sublower for 10 minutes. Related: Can you freeze cream cheese? In some recipes, some ingredients like cream cheese must be at room temperature before you can use them. Even if you know this already (which you probably do, if you like to bake), that doesn't mean you remember to take cream cheese out of the fridge so it has time to soften-preferably for an hour. If you are in this situation, don't panic. Delicious desserts are still in your future. Here are three quick and easy ways to get cream cheese up to room temperature. Unpack the cream and place it on a microwave-safe plate. Microwave it 10 seconds at a time, check the consistency and temperature after each interval, for 30 seconds. Pro: This is the fastest way to soften cream cheese. Con: It can go from soft to a puddle in seconds, so you need to look at the microwave thoroughly. And you have to get a right dirty. Place the unopened aluminum foil wrapped cream cheese in a ziplock bag and push all the air out of the bag before sealing it. Fill a large bowl (or sink) with warm water. Place the bag of cream cheese in the warm water and soak it for about 10 minutes, or until the cream cheese is soft. For: No dishes to wash! And you can do this step while you prep other ingredients for your recipe. Con: This method is not as easy if cream cheese is in a bathtub rather than a package. WATCH: You have to make this Baklava Cheesecake This Weekend Cut cream cheese into small pieces (or scoop it out of a container into small blobs) and place them on a plate. Let the cream cheese sit in a warm place for about 30 minutes, or until it has softened. For: This is the easiest way to soften cream cheese and doesn't require you to look at it like a hawk. Con: This method takes more time (but it still cuts down the usual process by half) 1 Cut cream cheese into cubes to help it soften faster. If you leave cream cheese in a block, the outside will begin to soften while the inside remains cool, slowing up the softening process. To avoid this, use a butter knife to slice the cream cheese into about 1 in (2.5 cm) pieces. [1] 2 Leave the cream cheese at room temperature for 30 minutes to soften it. If you have time, you can soften cream cheese by simply storing it at room temperature for about 30 minutes. When cream cheese reaches room temp, it should be noticeably softer. If it still feels cool to the touch and is not soft enough, let it sit for another 20-30 minutes. [2] You can leave the cream cheese in its original container or you can transfer it to a new one. If cream cheese is still not soft enough after an hour, you may need to stir in another ingredient like milk, lemon juice, or whipped cream to soften it. 3 Stir your cream cheese for about 5 minutes to soften it manually. Spreading cream cheese out can help it to soften without the addition of any heat. For example, you can place the cream cheese in a bowl, then use the back of a spoon to stir it. The more you stir, the softer the cheese. [3] If you have a stand mixer, beat the cream cheese with a paddle attachment for about 60 seconds. 4 Spread the cream cheese thinly to soften even faster. For an even faster approach, try placing cream cheese between 2 sheets of parchment paper, then break it up with a rolling pin or the flat side of a lollipop. When the cheese spreads, it should become soft quite quickly. [4] Keep in mind You have to scrape cream cheese from parchment when you are done. 5 Press a spoon into the cream cheese to see if it is soft enough. Once you have warmed the cream cheese, take a few seconds to check that it is the right consistency. Press on the back of a spoonful of cream cheese, either through the cover or directly into the cheese itself. If it gives way easily and offers no resistance, it should be soft enough for most recipes. On the other hand, if it's still fixed, you might want to warm it a little more. 6 Do not allow softened cream cheese to sit for more than 2 hours. Cream cheese has a fairly long shelf life: in the fridge it can sometimes last for up to a month and in the freezer it can easily hold twice that. But like many dairy products, it destroys quite quickly at room temperature. Once you have warmed your cream cheese, try to use it as quickly as possible, returning any leftovers to the refrigerator. [5] Do not leave cream cheese at room temperature for more than 2 hours. If it has been omitted for longer than that, consider throwing it away. 1 Microka cream cheese in 15-second steps to soften it quickly. Scoop your cream cheese into a microwave-safe bowl or dish. With your microwave oven at high power, heat the cream cheese for about 15 seconds, then check it. If it is not soft enough, continue microwaving it in 10-second increments, checking it after each warm-up session. [6] To heat larger portions of cream cheese, add 10 seconds to the microwave time for each additional 8 ounces (225 g). [7] If the cream cheese becomes too soft, transfer it to a cool bowl, then leave it at room temperature for about 5 minutes. You can also place it in the refrigerator for 2 minutes, if you prefer. If your cream cheese came wrapped in metallic packaging, do not place the foil in the microwave oven. If any of the liquid, known as whey, differs from your cream cheese when you heat it, just add it to your recipe along with solids. 2 Place the cream cheese in a water bath for 10 minutes to heat it gradually. Fill a bowl with lukewarm water, then place the package of cream cheese in the water and let it sit for 10 minutes. Leave the cream cheese in the water for another 10 minutes if it needs to soften more. If it is still not soft enough after that, add warmer water to the bowl. However, do not use hot water, which can melt solids in cream cheese. [8] If the cream cheese has already been opened, put it in an airtight plastic bag or wrap it tightly in plastic plastic to prevent water from entering. If the cream cheese was frozen, use cold water instead of lukewarm. It will take longer, but the cold water will help cream cheese heat more evenly. 3 Avoid overheating the cream cheese to preserve its consistency. It is possible to heat cream cheese too much when you try to soften it. The solids in the cream cheese can melt and leave with a garbage, runny mess, and unfortunately it can not return to its normal consistency when it is chilled. Prevention is the best remedy here. Use gentle heat and short heating periods to prevent overheating. Increase the temperature and time gradually if you need a softer texture. 1 Add milk or cream to soften the cheese without changing the taste. Place 8 oz (225 g) of cream cheese in a bowl, then add about 1 tsp (4.9 mL) of milk or unsweetened cream to the cheese and stir it well. If you need to, add a little more until cream cheese is the consistency you are looking for. [9] These neutral-flavored dairy products are perfect for thinning out cream cheese without affecting its taste much. They can make cream cheese slightly less tangy, but the difference will not be noticeable in most recipes. 2 Add melted butter for smooth, thin cream cheese. Butter is another good choice for thinning out cream cheese. To thin an 8 oz (225 g) pack of cream cheese, melt about 1 tbsp (14.2 g) butter in the microwave. Then, combine the butter and cream cheese in a separate bowl, stirring well. Add a little more butter if the cream cheese is not soft enough after the first addition. Do not heat the cream cheese with the butter if you do not want it to melt as well. Use unsalted butter if you can, as salted butter will change the taste of cream cheese. 3 Try adding 1 teaspoon (4.9 mL) of lemon juice to add a little tartness. Lemon juice will not only thin out solid cream cheese-it will also give it a noticeably sour taste. This can be delicious in glaze and other sweet and sour desserts, although it won't go well with every dish. Just stir in about 1 teaspoon (4.9 mL) of lemon juice for every 8 oz (225 g) of cream cheese. [10] 4 Mix the cream cheese with whipped cream to add sweetness. A large spoonful of fluffy spread like whipped cream can be perfect if you need thin cream cheese for glaze. This will give cream cheese a mildly sweet taste, rather than adding to the tartness of lemon juice. Start by adding 1 US tbsp (15 mL) whipping cream to 8 oz (225 g) of cream cheese, then add more if you need to. 5 Mix the cream cheese with mascarpone to soften it slightly. Mascarpone is an Italian spread that is very similar to cream cheese. But it's a little lighter and softer. Since it's so close to cream cheese already, mascarpone makes a good choice when you want to make cream cheese just a little softer than it already is. The effect is subtle but noticeable-perfect as a topping for desserts like French toast and bread pudding. [11] Add New Question Question How do I get the lumps out of cream cheese? Beat the cream cheese at a low speed and then slowly go up to the highest speed. Then you can thin cream cheese if desired. Question Will whipping my cream cheese make it more spreadable? Yes, whisk the cream cheese aerate it, making it easier and easier to spread. Ask Will cream cheese thicken again if I have melted it in the microwave? No, it won't thicken when it's melted or softened. It becomes creamy because the main ingredient is milk. Ask What can I replace with cream cheese if I am allergic to it? Coconut oil with a small mixture of mustard works. Question Does Cream Cheese Crystallize When Overheated in a Microwave? It won't crystallize, but it will melt if overheated. Question How can I make cream cheese fluffy for use in a pastry bag? Beat it up with a stand mixer or a hand blender to incorporate more air into it. Question I've already mixed cream cheese and non dairy whipped topping, but the cream cheese is lumpy. What should I do? Try cutting it up into cubes then put them in a Ziploc (resealable plastic) bag. Then press them with your hands instead of doing it, then mix it with a blender. Ask a question Thank you! Thanks! This article was co-authored by our trained team of editors and researchers who validated it for accuracy and comprehensiveness. wikiHow's Content Management Team closely monitors the work of our editorial team to ensure that each article is backed by trusted research and meets our high quality standards. This article has been viewed 576,312 times. Co-authors: 11 Updated: November 17, 2020 Views: 576,312 Categories: Cheese Print Send fan mail to authors Thanks to all authors for creating a page that has been read 576,312 times. The fact that reduced fat cream cheese softens less quickly was news to me, but it makes sense, because it contains less fat. This tidbit is helpful, because I use fat-free cream cheese, and I have to heat it to soften it. Thanks. more I now know how long to leave the cream cheese out to soften for my Chili Dip. Also taught me a lot of other ways to soften the cream cheese, depending on what I do. more I use cream cheese in a crab dip and wanted to know how to soften it. This article was very helpful Needed to know how long cream cheese can soften at room temp without spoiling. Thanks for sharing! It's good to know I don't have to wait more than an hour. The many options you gave helped. Share your story