The Art of Vegan Cheeses

From nut to cheese: 15 recipes to transform your kitchen into an artisan vegan creamery

Alex Fernandes
Guia Vegano

The Art of Vegan Cheeses, 1st edition — 2026

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* The photographs in this book are real images of cheeses made by the author, taken with a cell phone camera in a home kitchen. Each photo went through an enhancement process with generative artificial intelligence, in which the central element — the cheese — is fully preserved, while the surrounding scene is recreated and expanded by AI to produce a more elaborate, professional-looking composition. The cheese you see is real. The setting around it is computer-generated.

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Foreword

Marly Winckler

I met Alex Fernandes at the IVU World Vegetarian Congress held in Florianópolis in 2004. I had just founded the Brazilian Vegetarian Society precisely to host that historic congress, and Alex soon offered to help with the SVB website. Since then he has been a constant, capable and dedicated partner, playing a decisive role in bringing to life, through that great window to the world that is the internet, the projects, news, events and initiatives of the SVB and, later, of the IVU — International Vegetarian Union.

When I became president of the IVU in 2011, Alex was already taking an active part in the organization's international events, beginning, I believe, with the IVU Centenary Congress in Dresden in 2008, and going on to many other gatherings around the world.

It was during the IVU Vegfest in San Francisco in 2012 that we came into closer contact with the pioneering work of Miyoko Schinner and her newly released cookbook of plant-based cheeses. That experience left a deep mark on Alex, who threw himself, with enthusiasm and skill, into developing those recipes and his own. From then on he began making vegan cheeses of excellent quality in Florianópolis, and for a long time I was a happy customer and admirer of them.

This book is the fruit of more than a decade of dedication, experimentation and refinement. And the most beautiful part is seeing that Alex now chooses to share this knowledge generously with everyone.

In the transition to veganism, cheese is often one of the hardest foods to give up. That is why being able to count on truly tasty, accessible and tested recipes like these is an enormous help to many people. I am sure this e-book will help not only those who want to become vegan, but also the many who are seeking to stay firm on this ethical, healthy and compassionate path.

More than a recipe book, this work carries a story of friendship, idealism, collective learning and commitment to a better world.

Marly Winckler *is a sociologist and founding president of the Brazilian Vegetarian Society (SVB) (2003–2015); president of the International Vegetarian Union (IVU) (2011–2025), now honorary president.*

Paula Brügger

California, all of a sudden... Yes, the story of this book began there, in Los Angeles, at a wonderful event organized by the International Vegetarian Union (IVU). I had the pleasure of being part of a group of Brazilians who attended the presentation and tasting of an immense variety of simply delicious vegan cheeses. Alex Fernandes – director of Guia Vegano and author of this book – was part of that group and decided to take on the challenge of bringing that pioneering experience to Brazil. He did, and he did it masterfully! He not only reproduced the recipes with great precision: he innovated, adding varieties of his own, and created the best cheeses I have ever eaten!

But since the author tells this story in detail, I would like to offer some other reflections here. The first is to praise Alex's generous decision to share his knowledge. Generosity is a fashionable word. Here, however, it faithfully conveys what this book is about: Alex lays out, honestly and courageously, the whole universe involved in a practice that is not only culinary but also revolutionary. That is because plant-based diets are intensive in knowledge and altruism, while diets based on animal products are intensive in natural resources and cruelty.

Quality vegan cheeses are expensive, it is true. They are seen as gourmet items. However, two important things need to be understood in this context. One is that the average price of cheeses made from the milk of mammals – such as cows and goats – does not reflect the environmental or social externalities of those production processes. The costs of the abject treatment inflicted on sentient beings, exploited and killed to produce these products, are immeasurable. But if even just the environmental and social externalities were quantified and priced, these products would no longer be competitively priced and would certainly fall into the gourmet category. Another, less obvious, issue is that we are (badly) accustomed to treating as "everyday" products that should be consumed with great restraint.

Vegan, plant-based diets should not be expensive. Because they are socially and environmentally sustainable, and ethically right toward animals, we can say that they are the diets of the future. But for us to make the transition to this fair food system, we need profound transformations, both cultural and in our public policies. In this sense, Alex Fernandes's experience and expertise are a valuable milestone that can light the way for hearts and minds toward this urgent and necessary paradigm shift.

Paula Brügger *holds a PhD in Society and Environment, coordinates the Observatory of Ecological Justice at the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC), and is the author of four books on Education, Environment and Animal Rights.*

From left to right: Marly Winckler, Alex Fernandes and Paula Brügger on the rooftop of VegNews magazine in San Francisco, 2012. The occasion was the launch of the magazine's issue devoted to plant-based cheeses and to Miyoko Schinner's cookbook, which would go on to directly inspire the recipes gathered in this book.

An Honest Word

For a long time I hesitated to write a book on this subject — or to teach courses. The reason is simple: this is not an easy thing for most people.

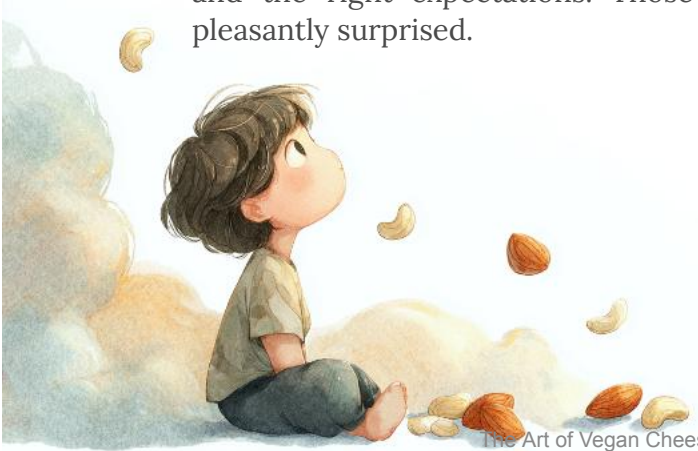
Making fermented vegan cheeses is not like following a cake recipe — mix the ingredients, wait for the oven and serve. Fermentation is something else. It means learning to work with living organisms that have their own cycles, and using the by-product of that cycle as the raw material for your cheese. It takes patience. It takes attention. It takes a certain willingness to face the unknown.

You will need to learn to tell smells apart. Between the good sour — that lively, tangy aroma of healthy fermentation — and the bad one, the rotten one, the one that belongs in the trash. The same goes for the taste of the fermented paste: it is a skill that develops with time and practice. Overall, the process is quite safe. But over the years I have noticed that some people struggle with the idea of working with fermentation — a certain squeamishness, as they say. If that is your case, be honest with yourself: maybe this book is not for you right now. And that's fine.

The second issue — just as important — is equipment. Vegan cheese paste will hardly reach the smooth, creamy texture it needs if it is blended only in ordinary blenders or conventional food processors. The vast majority of appliances available in Brazil simply lack the speed and power required. For this work, you need a high-speed blender — such as a Vitamix.

Yes, the Vitamix is expensive. Very expensive, especially in Brazil, where it is imported. Mine came back with me from a trip abroad and cost 400 dollars at the time — and it was one of the best investments I have ever made in the kitchen. It worked flawlessly for more than ten years. Today it is showing signs of fatigue: it heats up quickly when pushed and shuts itself off to protect the motor — a protective mechanism that, by the way, says a lot about the engineering of the machine. There is a Brazilian alternative, Marchesoni, which does reach high speeds. However, under continuous use with heavy mixtures such as cheese paste, its weakest points — the jar and the coupling that fits onto the motor — tend to wear out or break over time.

Why am I telling you all this? Because this material is offered free of charge, and precisely for that reason I have nothing to sell, no illusion to build, no problem to hide. I don't want to discourage you — I want you to start this adventure with your eyes open and the right expectations. Those who come prepared are far more likely to be pleasantly surprised.



— Alex Fernandes, Guia Vegano

Introduction

The art of cheesemaking is as old as human civilization itself. For millennia, cheese has been a symbol of transformation — of the patience to let time do its work, of the alchemy of turning something simple into something complex and full of flavor. In today's world, that alchemy has taken on a new dimension: demand for products that replicate the texture, aroma and flavor of traditional cheeses is growing worldwide, driven by rising awareness of the health effects of milk and dairy products. Making something truly convincing — something that surprises the palate and satisfies the heart — has always been the real challenge.

In 2012, we started our artisan production of cashew cheeses in Brazil. From the very beginning it was clear that the cheapest and most widely used ingredients for this purpose — soy, potato, starches of various kinds, plus artificial flavorings — often deliver results that fall short of consumer expectations. Aiming to create products with genuine sensory quality, we began a broad research effort that led us to cashew-based fermentation, a practice already common in raw vegan cuisine. The fermenting agent was Rejuvelac — a liquid made mainly from fermented wheat berries, which can also be produced with other grains. Over time, we also adopted kefir grains as an equally effective and accessible alternative.

The results were revealing. Tests showed that cashews and almonds are the ideal ingredients for replicating the flavor of a dairy product. Other nuts produced unwanted flavors or textures and worked only in supporting roles — interesting in small proportions to create new and exotic flavors. Samples of every formulation were well received in sensory evaluations of appearance, flavor, texture, aroma and overall acceptability. They all derive from a fermented base paste that can gain complexity with the addition of other ingredients — nutritional yeast, seaweed gel (agar-agar), carrot as a natural coloring and source of carbohydrates, and fats that add creaminess. The method made it possible to create products surprisingly close to Brazil's most popular cheeses — such as Prato and Minas — without any artificial flavorings whatsoever.

In this book, we share the fruit of all these years of research and continuous experimentation. Recipes born of trial and error, of discoveries that happen when we allow ourselves to question what we think we know about flavor and texture. Each cheese has its own personality, its own timing, its own technique. We refined every formulation over time — looking for new flavors, new textures, new ways to surprise — and what you will find in these pages represents the best of that journey.

Don't rush. Fermentation teaches this better than any words can. Read each recipe all the way through before you begin. Prepare your ingredients with care. And remember: the kitchen is a place of creation — feel free to adjust seasonings, try variations and, above all, share what you make.

Food is meant to be shared.

Ingredient Guide

Before you get your hands in the dough — or rather, in the nuts — it is worth getting to know the ingredients that are the soul of these recipes.

Nutritional Yeast

The secret behind the "cheesy" flavor in vegan cooking. Rich in B vitamins and protein, it has a deep, slightly smoky umami flavor. Note: do not confuse it with brewer's yeast, which is somewhat easier to find in Brazil but tastes bitter and does not give the same result. They are completely different products. Yellow nutritional yeast — made from beet molasses — is not manufactured in Brazil; every brand available there uses imported raw material. It comes in flakes or powder: the powder goes further and is the better deal for anyone importing directly; flakes are more common in health food stores and specialty shops.

Carrageenan

Extracted from red seaweed, it is a gelling agent that gives cheeses an elastic, creamy texture. Unlike agar, it does not need to be boiled — only hydrated. Use it carefully: a little goes a long way.

Agar-Agar

Also extracted from seaweed, it is the vegan gelling agent that replaces animal gelatin. It must be boiled to activate its properties. It creates firm, sliceable textures. The more agar, the harder the cheese.

Cashews and Almonds

The creamy, protein-rich base of most of these recipes. Cashews, especially when soaked, have a unique creaminess when blended. Almonds bring a more delicate, slightly sweet flavor. Always choose raw, unsalted nuts.

Water Kefir Fermentation

Kefir grains turn nuts into something alive, with acidity and complexity of flavor. Fermentation time ranges from 24 to 48 hours, depending on room temperature. The warmer it is, the faster the process.

Palm Fat

Used to bring creaminess and the rich, fatty character of conventional cheeses, palm fat has properties very similar to those of butter made from cow's milk — which is why it appears in so many recipes in this book. In most preparations it can be replaced with flavorless coconut fat, with small differences in the final texture.

A word of caution for socially and environmentally conscious shoppers: palm fat has a well-deserved bad reputation when it is produced in Indonesia and Malaysia, where clearing

forests to grow oil palms is one of the main threats to orangutan habitat. Brazil, however, also produces palm fat — and there it can be found with a sustainable-cultivation seal, produced on already degraded areas of the Amazon within productive reforestation programs. These are different products with completely different impacts. Check the origin on the package before you buy. One important thing about palm and coconut fats is that they mask the taste of salt in food, so you need to use more salt when you add these fats.

Red Miso

A Japanese fermented soybean paste, miso adds depth of umami flavor. Red miso (aka miso) is milder than dark miso and more intense than white — ideal for vegan cheeses.

Sweet or Sour Cassava Starch

Cassava starch (polvilho) — both sweet and sour — is a thickener that gives cheeses a smooth, elastic texture. Sweet cassava starch (tapioca starch) is used mainly to give the paste structure; sour cassava starch, besides structure, adds a slight acidity that can be welcome in certain recipes. Both have their place in this book, depending on the result you are after.

An important practical caveat: don't overdo the amount. In the recipes presented here, it never exceeds three tablespoons, and there is a reason for that. Cassava starch makes the paste considerably heavier and denser, which strains the blender motor more than necessary. Unlike traditional Brazilian cheese bread (pão de queijo), the starch here is not scalded — and that is intentional. Scalded starch would produce a paste so dense that it would be impossible to blend, even for a Vitamix.

It is worth noting, however, that the starch does not go into the recipe completely cold and inactive. When the agar-agar or carrageenan mixture — still hot — is poured into the blender and blended with the other ingredients, the heat of that process partially activates the starch. It is not a true scalding, but it is enough for the starch to do its job as a thickener and contribute to the cheese's final texture. If you are curious to try scalded starch in a variation of your own, do it outside the blender — in a pan or bowl, working the paste by hand or with a spatula.

Canola Oil

Canola oil is one of the most nutritionally balanced vegetable oils on the market — neutral in flavor, with a high smoke point and a composition rich in omega-3, which makes it a good choice both for cold recipes and for cooking. There is a lot of misinformation about canola on social media, usually tied to the fact that the plant is grown in genetically modified varieties. If that matters to you, simply replace it with another neutral vegetable oil of your choice — what matters in the recipe is the absence of a distinctive flavor. Virgin oils such as olive oil or unrefined coconut oil can be used, but they will add their own flavor to the final product, which may or may not be desirable depending on the recipe.

Salt

In this book, salt deserves special attention because it appears at two distinct moments with different roles. During the fermentation of the nuts, avoid ordinary iodized table salt — iodine interferes with the kefir microorganisms and can compromise or even prevent fermentation. Look for non-iodized salt, available in health food stores or from compounding pharmacies. In the recipes themselves, after fermentation, any salt can be used: table salt, sea salt, pink salt, smoked salt — the choice is yours and depends on the flavor profile you want to achieve.

Tofu

Tofu is a food of Asian origin made from soy milk that is coagulated and pressed into blocks, in a process very similar to how conventional cheese is made — which is why it is popularly called soy cheese. It comes in different textures: silken tofu, softer and with a high water content, is ideal for creams, mousses and desserts; firm tofu, with less moisture and a denser structure, is the most versatile and the one called for in this book's recipes. In vegan cooking, tofu is a wild card: it absorbs seasonings easily, can be grilled, baked, smoked, blended or mashed, and works as a protein base in dishes ranging from breakfast scrambles to fillings, sauces and creamy cheeses. Found today in mid-sized supermarkets across much of Brazil, it is one of the most accessible and practical ingredients in this collection of recipes.

About the Nuts

As mentioned in the introduction, cashews and almonds are the best ingredients for achieving the flavor and texture expected of a vegan cheese. Cashews have an additional advantage: their natural yellowish-beige color already contributes to the look of the final product, bringing it visually closer to conventional cheeses without any coloring.

There is one detail that cannot be ignored: the cashews must be raw — and unsalted. Raw cashews are the ones that ferment well. Any other processing compromises the result.

Because they are an expensive ingredient, it is natural for anyone producing to sell to do everything possible to find raw cashews at the lowest price — and I was no different. In that search you will come across an enormous number of options and producers willing to push all kinds of production rejects. Here is an important warning: the minimum worth accepting is raw cashew halves — the kernel split in two, but still whole and clean. Broken cashew pieces, even if sold as raw, are no good. They often come mixed with shells and impurities that darken the paste and leave a strange, unpleasant flavor in the finished cheese.

For almonds, the best option is to buy almond flour directly, already blanched and ground. It can be found in many specialty and bulk food stores and is very convenient for home use. For those thinking of producing on a larger scale — with the aim of selling — the most economical route is to buy by the case. In my production I worked with 22 kg cases, usually Californian or Spanish almonds, which come out considerably cheaper than buying small quantities at retail.

The Right Blender for the Right Job

There is a question I often get from people who try to reproduce these recipes at home and don't get the expected result: *what am I doing wrong?* In most cases, the answer lies neither in the technique nor in the ingredients. It lies in the equipment.

Before going on, I need to be honest about something no salesperson will tell you: there is a huge gap between an ordinary blender and a high-speed blender — and that difference is not one of degree but of kind. They are machines that do similar things in the same way that a bicycle and a motorcycle do similar things: both have two wheels and take you from one place to another, but nobody would confuse one with the other on a steep climb.

It's not just about power. It's about speed.

An ordinary household blender runs at between 3,000 and 5,000 revolutions per minute. A high-performance machine like the Vitamix spins at between 25,000 and 37,000+ revolutions per minute. Think about what that means in practice: while the ordinary blender makes one turn, the Vitamix has already made eight. While the ordinary one blends for one minute, the Vitamix delivers the equivalent of more than eight minutes of effective work — in less than sixty seconds.

That is why nut paste made in an ordinary blender comes out grainy, with small bits you can feel on your tongue. To reach the perfectly smooth texture these recipes require, you would have to blend for so long that the motor would overheat, the machine would stall — or simply give up halfway. This is no exaggeration: it's physics.

A useful analogy

Imagine you need to sand a wooden surface until it is completely smooth. You can do it with coarse sandpaper and a lot of force — it will take hours, it will wear you out, and the result will probably still have imperfections. Or you can use an electric sander that makes thousands of movements per minute and get done in minutes what would take hours by hand. The principle is the same. More turns per second means more contact between the blades and the ingredient, which means smaller particles, which means a more stable emulsion, which means a texture that simply cannot be achieved any other way — no matter how long you blend at a lower speed.

About the investment

The Vitamix is expensive. In Brazil, where it is imported, it can cost more than R$6,000.00 depending on the model and the exchange rate. I completely understand that this is not a simple purchase — and I won't pretend it is. Mine came back with me from a trip abroad and worked flawlessly for more than ten years of regular production. When you divide the cost by ten years of daily use, the math looks very different.

If the investment is not feasible right now, there are high-power, high-speed Brazilian alternatives that come close — Marchesoni is the most frequently mentioned. It reaches high speeds and works well for moderate home use, although under heavy, continuous use the jar and base tend to wear out sooner than you would like. For those just starting to explore these recipes before deciding whether to commit to the process, it is a reasonable path.

What I don't recommend is persisting with conventional blenders and expecting different results. You can have all the right ingredients, ferment carefully, follow every step to the letter — and still end up with a cheese whose texture falls short of what the recipe promises. The equipment is not a detail. For these recipes, it is part of the recipe.

Fermentation

In older books such as those by Miyoko Schinner — a pioneer of artisan vegan cheesemaking, with books published from 2012 onward — the recommendation was to use Rejuvelac as the fermenting agent. It is a clever solution: all you need are wheat berries, rye or another cereal grain to start fermenting the grains, collect the resulting water and use it to ferment the nuts. The problem is that Rejuvelac has no continuity — every time you need to ferment, you start from scratch. Over time and with production at scale, this becomes a tiring and impractical cycle.

In this book, the trick is different: use kefir.

Water kefir is a living culture, made up of a symbiotic colony of bacteria and yeasts. Unlike Rejuvelac, it is continuous — just feed it daily with brown sugar and mineral water and you will have a practically endless supply of starter. For larger batches and for anyone thinking of selling, this makes all the difference. You can use either the kefir water or the grains themselves to ferment the nuts.

Where to find kefir

The first step is to get water kefir grains. The good news is that people who grow kefir at home almost always have a generous surplus — it multiplies easily and has to be given away regularly. Look in WhatsApp groups, Instagram profiles or healthy-eating communities near you. Many cities have active, free donation networks. Whoever supplies them may charge a small fee for the work of separating and packing them, which is quite reasonable. As a last resort, you can find sellers on Amazon who ship by mail — a viable option for people in more remote areas.

How to grow water kefir

Growing water kefir is simple, but it requires regularity. The grains are living organisms — treat them as such.

Dissolve 1 to 2 tablespoons of brown sugar in 500 ml of room-temperature mineral water. Never use tap water — the chlorine and other compounds in it can kill or weaken the grains. Add the kefir grains, cover the container with a cloth or with the lid not fully sealed — the gases need to escape — and leave it in a cool, dry place for 24 to 48 hours.

At the end of each cycle, strain the grains through a plastic or wooden sieve (avoid metal, which can react with the acidity and harm the microorganisms) and keep the resulting water, which is your starter. Feed the grains again with water and sugar and start the cycle over. Over time the colony will visibly grow — you will be able to share the surplus, just as someone did with you.

Healthy kefir produces slightly cloudy, lightly fizzy water. The grains should look translucent and gelatinous, like small crystals. If they turn dark, overly soft or smell unpleasant, something has gone wrong — discard them and start again with new grains.

Making the Fermented Base Paste

Soak 2 cups (about 400 ml) of raw cashews in mineral water for at least 4 hours — and no more than 8. The longer they soak, the softer the cashews become, but soaking too long can leave them waterlogged, making the final paste less firm. Drain well in a sieve and use only the softened cashews.

If you are working with almond flour, the soak can be shorter — 2 hours is enough. For whole almonds, use the same time as for cashews: 4 hours.

With almond flour there is no way to drain it, so use everything that went into the soak; it will be somewhat soggy. Add 1 tablespoon of kefir water (it can include a few grains, no problem) and blend in the high-speed blender until you have a completely smooth paste with no lumps. A pinch of non-iodized salt helps create the right environment for fermentation — the iodine in ordinary salt can interfere with the kefir microorganisms. If you cannot find non-iodized salt in stores, a compounding pharmacy can prepare it. In my experience, leaving out the salt did not prevent fermentation — the process went on normally — but if you run into difficulties, try adding it.

Transfer the blended paste to a glass container with a lid. Avoid metal utensils throughout the process — plastic or wooden spoons are ideal. The lid does not need to seal airtight: carbon dioxide will be produced during fermentation and needs a way out. At the same time, protecting the paste from open air is essential to prevent contamination by mold and insects. Simply covering it with a cloth, as some authors recommend, has not been enough in my experience — the chance of mold developing is high, and if that happens, the paste goes in the trash.

Place the jar in a cool, dry place and wait between 24 and 48 hours. In Brazil, given the heat that prevails across much of the country, 24 hours is usually enough in most cases. The longer it ferments, the more acidic the paste becomes — and if it goes too long, it becomes inedible. Keep an eye on it.

How to tell it worked

The smell of the fermented paste has always reminded me of bread starter — that aroma of slightly sour raw dough, almost like yogurt. It is a lively smell, not an unpleasant one. Visually, the paste should show small bubbles inside, a sign that the organisms are active. If the jar is clear glass, you will easily see this fizzing — and it is a good sign that everything went well.

The raw fermented paste is already fit to eat. Some simpler cheeses — such as a rustic vegan chèvre — are made by mixing this paste with a few additional ingredients, and the result can be served right away.

Ideally, process the paste on the same day fermentation ends, while it is fresh and at exactly the right point. It can be kept in the refrigerator, but with some caveats: as it chills, the paste compacts a little and becomes denser, which makes later work harder.

In addition, fermentation does not stop completely in the refrigerator — it only slows down. Unless there is a subsequent heating step to halt the microorganisms, the paste will keep getting more and more acidic. That is why turning it into cheese as soon as possible is always the best choice. Processes involving agar-agar, because they use heat, usually stop fermentation naturally.

Combining Agar and Carrageenan

One thing needs to be clear before moving on to the recipes that use these two gelling agents together: agar-agar sometimes has a mind of its own. It goes wrong easily if the measurements are not respected, and I cannot guarantee that every brand behaves the same way. Each batch has a different concentration, and some brands are simply stronger or weaker than others. If you get inconsistent results, try adjusting the quantities — one spoonful more or less can completely change the outcome.

The goal in combining the two is to obtain a hot, gelatinous liquid with a stretchy, taffy-like texture, which will be poured straight into the blender over the fermented nut paste. When blended with the rest of the recipe's ingredients, this liquid must become completely homogeneous. Because it is hot, it also halts the fermentation of the nuts — preserving only the good flavor the fermentation brought, without letting the process go on indefinitely.

Cooking in the pan

The procedure starts while the water is still cold. Put the amount of water indicated in the recipe — 200 ml or 400 ml — into the pan along with the required spoonfuls of agar and carrageenan. Stir lightly with a spoon and turn on the heat. From that moment on, stir continuously. You cannot stop, you cannot let it form lumps. The mixture has to be worked without interruption until it is completely smooth and starts to bubble.

Don't let it go much beyond that point, or it will burn. Agar tends to stick to the sides of the pan and form a film that hardens like plastic as it dries and can burn — and that will contaminate the mixture with solid bits that will not blend in later. Always stir by pulling from the sides toward the center.

When the mixture is translucent, smooth and gently bubbling, it is ready. Don't waste time — pour it immediately over the fermented nut paste in the blender.

The blender stage

This is where the most strenuous part of the whole process begins. The agar will add density to the paste — and that density will strain the blender motor in a way most household appliances simply cannot handle. Ordinary blenders will burn out. This is no exaggeration: the motor was not designed for this effort and will give out after a short time under these conditions.

Only blenders in the class of a Vitamix — or equivalent high-power, high-speed machines, whatever the brand — can sustain this process for many years without damage. If you plan to produce regularly, investing in the right equipment is not optional.

With the Vitamix, hold the base of the jar firmly with one hand so it doesn't jump during processing. Use the tamper vigorously, with up-and-down movements, pushing the paste toward the blades. Also give the tamper a slight twist (always holding the base of the jar firmly) to force all of the paste through the blades. The process needs to be vigorous and fast — if it takes too long, even a brand-new Vitamix may shut off automatically from overheating.

Halfway through, stop for a moment to check the consistency. There must be no lumps. If the agar escapes the blades before it is fully incorporated, it will set into drops or fragments that look like translucent plastic — and will be off-putting in the finished cheese.

Pour into the mold immediately

Once smooth, the paste must go straight into the mold — which should be ready and set out beside you before you even turn the blender on. Don't let the freshly blended hot paste sit in the jar: it can start to set right there, and getting a block of cheese out of the blender is not a pleasant experience.

The mold ready, the paste hot, the movement quick. That is the sequence.

Flavorings: To Use or Not to Use?

The use of flavorings in plant-based cheeses is a topic that divides opinion. Some people love that intense, distinctive taste that immediately brings industrial products to mind — and some turn up their noses at anything that is not completely "natural." Personally, I don't identify with either extreme. When a flavoring is genuinely good, true to the cheese it represents and plays a real role in the recipe, I see no reason to avoid it on principle. The problem is that it is often simply unnecessary — and yet producers, usually industrial ones, insist on using it.

It is important for consumers to keep this in mind: using flavorings automatically makes a food processed to some degree, regardless of everything else in it. That is how any serious nutrition physician or dietitian will classify the product. It is not a moral judgment — it is a regulatory and nutritional reality worth knowing before you decide.

The flavoring industry has very well-defined marketing. The sales pitch is simple: instead of using the real ingredient, you use the flavoring — cheaper, more convenient, supposedly with the same effect on consumer satisfaction at a fraction of the cost. It is a logic that makes sense at industrial scale, but it deserves to be questioned when you make artisan cheese with intention and care.

In the years I made cheese, I used flavorings sparingly, only when I found truly good options — true to the cheese they represented or, at the very least, suited to that flavor profile. In those cases, the flavoring was the icing on the cake: I did not rely on it alone, but it completed and deepened the experience. The cheeses I used them in were Cheddar, Gorgonzola, Provolone and Parmesan.

Of those four, the only one I genuinely could not have reproduced without the flavoring was Gorgonzola — because the real alternative would be working with mold cultures, a process that simply was not in my plans. Cheddar, on the other hand, holds up very well with just more nutritional yeast and miso. Provolone is excellent with liquid smoke, which is a more accessible ingredient and arguably close to natural. Parmesan suffers a little without its specific flavoring, but it still fools people very well — mainly thanks to its grainy texture and the intense flavor of the yeast.

Finding a good flavoring, however, is harder than it seems. Most flavorings sold in small quantities were developed for confectionery and sweets. For savory dishes — and especially for cheeses — the options are far more limited. When I dug deeper and contacted manufacturers directly, I discovered that the producers simply don't sell in small quantities. Those who sell small amounts are middlemen: companies that bought large stocks from the industry and tried to build a business reselling them in smaller portions. In Brazil, for a while, there was a brand doing exactly that — it was the one I bought from. Today it no longer sells this kind of product. It probably didn't generate the demand it expected.

Since this book is to be translated into English and possibly other languages, I recommend that readers look in local stores and on online platforms such as Amazon for whatever is available in their region — the chances of finding more options vary a great deal from country to country.

For all these reasons, I chose to list flavorings as optional in this book's recipes. If you find one and want to try it, always start with a few drops and test gradually — each flavoring may have a different concentration, and the amounts given here are a reference for the products I used at the time, not a universal rule.

To make Gorgonzola without mold, a good solution is to start from the Mozzarella recipe and, after blending the paste, fold in chopped parsley and chives with a spoon — without blending or processing. The goal is simply to create the visual illusion of the mold veins characteristic of the original cheese. In my experience, the result was very well received.

In any case, if you find a flavoring and want to try it, always start with a few drops and test gradually — each product may have a different concentration, and the amounts given in the recipes are a reference for the flavorings I used at the time, not a universal rule. And if at some point the result without the flavoring is already satisfying, don't insist. Sometimes the best flavoring is none at all.

What Consumers Really Want

Twenty-one years of Guia Vegano have taught me many things no marketing book ever could. Events, fairs, emails, social media and years of in-person service in a physical store — all of it builds up an understanding of what people expect from a vegan product that only time and direct contact can provide. In this book, I want to share what I have learned specifically about cheese and butter, because understanding the consumer is as important as mastering the recipe.

Far beyond flavor

When you try to reproduce an existing food using other ingredients — whether for ethics, health or environmental awareness — the instinct is to focus on flavor. That makes sense. But flavor alone does not close the deal. The experience of eating a cheese begins long before it reaches your mouth.

It begins with the eyes. Cheese has to look like cheese — with a recognizable color, shape and size. A product that does not look like what it promises to be has already lost half the battle before anyone tastes it. Then comes the smell. I saw it happen countless times in the store: before anything else, customers bring their nose close. It is an almost instinctive gesture, a primal check that the thing is edible and familiar. Only then comes the tasting — and that is where things start to get complicated.

The problem with industrial imitations

The experience of tasting a cheese made from milk brings together a set of attributes that is very hard to combine in a single vegan product: texture, elasticity, meltability, acidity, creaminess. Most industrial imitations fail because they try to solve only one of these attributes and ignore the others. The most common result on the market is cheese made primarily to melt — which, eaten cold, is simply inedible. This is one of the central reasons so many people say they hate industrial vegan cheese. It is not veganism itself that puts them off — it is the bad experience of a product that only works in a very specific context.

With certain gums and additives, the industry manages to reproduce, up to a point, the elasticity characteristic of casein — the milk protein that makes cheese "stretch" when melted. It is an undeniable technical achievement. But a higher-protein cheese simply doesn't melt well, and a cheese rich enough in fat to melt often loses flavor when eaten cold. It is a hard equation to balance, and the industry, generally speaking, chooses meltability and sacrifices the rest.

The cheeses in this book

The artisan cashew and almond cheeses presented here — especially those with added fat — work in both contexts: they can be eaten cold, sliced, on a cheese board or in a sandwich, and they also melt well enough for lasagnas, pizzas and hot sandwiches. They will not have the elastic stretch of melted dairy cheese — it would be dishonest to promise that. I experimented with recipes that try to reproduce that elasticity, some with interesting results, but to keep up a real production pace, with practicality and consistency, I chose to simplify the ingredients as much as possible. The result is an honest product that delivers what it promises.

When you sell, ask customers what they plan to do with the cheese. Someone who wants it for pizza will need a fattier recipe; someone who wants it for a cheese board can go for something drier and tangier. This simple guidance prevents disappointment — and disappointment with a vegan product comes at a high cost, because it often drives the person away from veganism along with it.

The level of acidity also divides opinion. Some people love the complexity of a tangier cheese, that lively, pronounced flavor that good fermentation brings. Others prefer something more neutral, milder, close to a subtle mozzarella. There's no accounting for taste — you accept it, and sometimes you quietly lament it.

Butter and the margarine trap

With butter, the challenge is different. Many consumers looking for a vegan butter carry the memory of margarine — a similar product, but different enough to create mistaken expectations. People who grew up in big cities rarely had frequent contact with real butter; what they know is margarine, soft and easy to spread straight from the refrigerator. The butter in this book's recipe does not work that way: it comes out of the refrigerator firm and needs a few minutes at room temperature to soften. That is exactly how conventional butter behaves — but for someone expecting margarine, it can come as a surprise.

Color is another decisive factor. Most of the recipes I found in other books use no coloring at all to make the butter yellow. Technically, the flavor may be the same. But the consumer's experience will not be — a white or whitish butter gives the feeling of eating pure fat, which is not wrong, but it is not what people want to feel. Cooked carrot solved this problem elegantly: besides providing the characteristic yellow color, it is rich in beta-carotene — the same pigment found in butter of animal origin, responsible for the golden tone we associate with the product.

I also tried working with flavorings in the butter. I gave up. It is extraordinarily difficult to find a flavoring that does not recall industrial margarine, with that artificial, rancid note that seems to shout "made in a lab." In the end, I chose not to use any flavoring at all — and the product was better without it. It is a lesson the food industry in general has yet to learn: some manufacturers seem conditioned to add flavoring to absolutely everything, as if the natural flavor of the ingredients were not enough. It is a hard paradigm to break — but anyone who tastes the difference quickly understands why it is worth it.

Vegan Cheeses

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Vegan Chèvre

Chèvre is a fresh cheese of French origin, traditionally made with goat's milk and known for its creamy texture and slightly tangy flavor — qualities that fermented cashews reproduce with surprising fidelity. It is also the simplest recipe in the book: no heating, no agar, no blender at the finishing stage. The acidity comes entirely from fermentation, and the result is a living cream cheese that keeps slowly maturing in the refrigerator, deepening in flavor every day.

INGREDIENTS

Amount	Ingredient
1 base batch	fermented cashew paste (2 cups of cashews blended with kefir — see the Fermentation chapter)
1 tablespoon	Nutritional yeast
1/2 teaspoon	Salt

METHOD

1. In a bowl, mix the fermented cashew paste with the nutritional yeast and salt. Work it well with a spatula or spoon until you have a completely smooth paste.
2. Taste and adjust the salt if needed — add just a pinch at a time, taste and repeat until it is right for you.

3. Transfer to glass jars with lids and refrigerate for at least 2 hours before serving.

Important: since the cashew paste does not go through the agar heating step as in the other recipes, fermentation keeps going slowly even in the refrigerator. For a milder flavor, use paste that has fermented for 24 hours. Chèvre keeps for up to 14 days refrigerated — and tends to become more complex and interesting as the days go by.

NUTRITION FACTS

Serving: 30g | Yield: ~420g (~14 servings)

Nutrient	Per serving
Energy	116 kcal
Protein	0.4 g
Carbohydrates	6.4 g
Total fat	9.3 g
Saturated fat	1.6 g
Dietary fiber	0.7 g
Sodium	87 mg

Values calculated from reference food composition tables (TACO/USDA). They may vary depending on the ingredients used.

Mozzarella

Mozzarella is perhaps the most versatile cheese in the world. It melts on pizza, stretches in the oven and disappears into soups with a quiet elegance that makes it indispensable. This vegan version, made from fermented cashews, rivals any conventional mozzarella in texture and flavor. The combination of agar-agar and carrageenan provides the characteristic elasticity that makes all the difference when it is sliced or melted. The secret lies in fermenting the cashews — don't skip this step. Those 24 hours are what turn a simple paste into something truly complex.

INGREDIENTS

Amount	Ingredient
1 base batch	fermented cashew paste (2 cups of cashews blended with kefir — see the Fermentation chapter)
1 tablespoon	Nutritional yeast
2 teaspoons	Salt
2 tablespoons	Agar-agar (dissolved in 200 ml of water)
2 tablespoons	Carrageenan (dissolved in 200 ml of water)
1 cup	Palm fat or refined coconut oil

METHOD

1. Ferment the cashews: soak for 8 hours, drain, transfer to a container covered with a lid and let ferment for 24 to 48 hours at room temperature, until a light sour aroma develops.
2. Put the carrageenan and 400 ml of cold water into a small saucepan, stirring well. Set aside.
3. Add the agar-agar to the cold water with the carrageenan and bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring constantly, then boil for a full 2 minutes.
4. In the blender, blend the fermented cashews with the nutritional yeast and salt until you have a perfectly smooth paste.
5. With the blender on its lowest speed, add the still-hot agar and carrageenan mixture and gradually increase to maximum speed. Use the tamper to force it in — it is an intense and necessary process. Blend until no lumps remain. Caution: unincorporated lumps of agar set inside the cheese looking like translucent plastic, which is very off-putting for whoever eats it.
6. Pour immediately into a mold. With agar, the cheese usually releases easily without greasing — if the mold is flexible, just twist it upside down and the cheese comes out whole. The carrageenan in this recipe can make the cheese stick a little more, especially if it turns out softer; greasing with a drizzle of oil is optional, and you will learn to judge after the first time.
7. Let cool to room temperature and refrigerate for at least 4 hours before unmolding and serving.
8. Mozzarella keeps for up to 14 days in the refrigerator, or for months if frozen.

Yield: 1 cheese of about 1200g

TIP *For a milder mozzarella, use fresh, unfermented cashews. For a more complex, slightly tangy flavor, ferment for 48 hours.*

NUTRITION FACTS

Serving: 30 g (one slice) | Servings per recipe: ~40 | Full recipe: ~1200 g

Nutrient	Per serving
Energy	100 kcal
Protein	1.9 g
Carbohydrates	3.1 g
Total fat	9.4 g
Saturated fat	3.2 g
Dietary fiber	0.4 g
Sodium	98 mg

Values calculated from reference food composition tables (TACO/USDA). They may vary depending on the ingredients used.

Cheddar

Cheddar has a history of more than 800 years. Originating in the English village of the same name, this orange-yellow cheese with its bold flavor has become one of the most widely eaten in the world. This vegan version uses cooked carrot to get that unmistakable color, and red miso to bring the depth of flavor that marks a good aged cheddar. The twenty drops of cheddar flavoring make all the difference — they are the finishing touch that rounds out the tasting experience. Use a good mold and be patient while it cools. The longer it stays in the refrigerator, the firmer and more sliceable it becomes.

INGREDIENTS

Amount	Ingredient
1 base batch	fermented cashew paste (2 cups of cashews blended with kefir — see the Fermentation chapter)
10 carrot slices, 1 cm thick	Cooked carrot
3 tablespoons	Nutritional yeast
1 tablespoon	Red miso (aka miso)
20 drops	Synthetic cheddar flavoring (optional)
1/2 cup	Palm fat
2 tablespoons	Agar-agar (dissolved in 200 ml of water)

2 tablespoons	Carrageenan (dissolved in 200 ml of water)
3 teaspoons	Salt

METHOD

1. Ferment the cashews for 24 to 48 hours at room temperature.
2. Cook the carrots until completely tender. Drain and set aside.
3. Dissolve the carrageenan and agar-agar in 400 ml of cold water. Bring to a boil and boil for 2 minutes, stirring well the whole time so it doesn't form lumps or burn.
4. In the blender, blend the fermented cashew paste, carrots, nutritional yeast, miso, palm fat and cheddar flavoring until you have a completely smooth, orange mixture.
5. With the blender on its lowest speed, add the still-hot agar and carrageenan mixture and gradually increase to maximum speed. Use the tamper to force it in. Blend until the paste is completely smooth and lump-free — agar lumps set inside the cheese looking like translucent plastic.
6. Pour into a mold and let cool. The carrageenan can make the cheese stick to the mold, especially if the paste turns out softer — greasing with a drizzle of oil is optional. Flexible molds make unmolding much easier. Refrigerate for at least 6 hours before serving. Cheddar keeps for up to 14 days in the refrigerator, or for months if frozen.

Yield: 1 cheese of about 1200g

TIP *For a sharper cheddar, increase the amount of miso and add 1 teaspoon of lemon juice. The acid brings out the flavors and adds that slightly sharp touch of aged cheddars. To make a softer, almost liquid cheddar, leave out the agar and use only the carrageenan, or even neither of them; in that case you can add ½ cup of liquid vegetable oil (not palm or coconut).*

NUTRITION FACTS

Serving: 30 g (one slice) | Servings per recipe: ~40 | Full recipe: ~1200 g

Nutrient	Per serving
Energy	67 kcal
Protein	1.7 g
Carbohydrates	3.1 g
Total fat	5.8 g
Saturated fat	1.8 g
Dietary fiber	0.4 g
Sodium	196 mg

Values calculated from reference food composition tables (TACO/USDA). They may vary depending on the ingredients used.

Provolone

Provolone is a cheese with a strong personality — smoky, slightly sharp, with that deep yellow that invites a bite. Originally from southern Italy, it came to Brazil in immigrants' luggage and is now a fixture in the country's pizzerias and bakeries. This vegan version uses provolone flavoring and liquid smoke to recreate those characteristic smoky notes. The cooked carrots lend color and sweetness; the cashews, the creamy base. The Vitamix is your best ally here — you want a perfectly smooth paste before adding the gelling agents.

INGREDIENTS

Amount	Ingredient
1 base batch	fermented cashew paste (2 cups of cashews blended with kefir — see the Fermentation chapter)
1 cup	Palm fat (or refined coconut fat)
10 drops	Provolone flavoring (optional)
1 tablespoon	Liquid smoke
20 carrot slices, 1 cm thick	Cooked carrot
2 tablespoons	Nutritional yeast
2 teaspoons	Salt
2 tablespoons	Carrageenan
2 tablespoons	Agar-agar (dissolved in 200 ml of water)

METHOD

1. Ferment the cashews for 24 hours, or 48 hours if you want more acidity.
2. Cook the carrots until completely tender. Drain and set aside.
3. Put the carrageenan into a small saucepan with 200 ml of cold water, stirring well. Set aside.
4. Add the agar-agar to the cold water with the carrageenan and bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring constantly, then boil for about 2 minutes.
5. In the Vitamix or a powerful blender, add the fermented cashew paste, carrots, nutritional yeast, salt, provolone flavoring, liquid smoke, palm fat and the hot agar and carrageenan mixture, in that order; the hot agar will help melt the palm fat sitting on top and liquefy it.
6. With the blender on its lowest speed, start processing and gradually increase to maximum speed. Use the tamper to force it in. Blend until no lumps remain — agar lumps set inside the cheese looking like translucent plastic.
7. Pour into a round mold for the classic provolone shape. The carrageenan can make the cheese stick to the mold — greasing with a drizzle of oil is optional; judge after the first time. Let cool and refrigerate for 6 to 8 hours.

Yield: 1 cheese of about 1200g

TIP *Liquid smoke is powerful — start with 1 tablespoon and adjust to taste. The goal is a subtle smoky flavor, not an overpowering one.*

NUTRITION FACTS

Serving: 30g | Yield: ~1200g (~40 servings)

Nutrient	Per serving
Energy	89 kcal
Protein	1.6 g
Carbohydrates	3.2 g
Total fat	8.3 g
Saturated fat	3 g
Dietary fiber	0.4 g
Sodium	125 mg

Values calculated from reference food composition tables (TACO/USDA). They may vary depending on the ingredients used.

Minas Cheese

Minas cheese is more than a cheese — it is a cherished memory, it is culture, it is the hospitality of Minas Gerais served in slices on warm bread. White, mild and slightly tangy, it is Brazil's most beloved cheese. This version, made with fermented almonds, has the characteristic delicacy that makes Minas cheese so special. The combination of agar-agar and carrageenan reproduces the slightly elastic texture of the original. Sliceable and fresh, it is perfect with vegan dulce de leche, guava paste or simply an afternoon coffee.

INGREDIENTS

Amount	Ingredient
1 base batch	fermented almond paste (2 cups of almond flour blended with kefir — see the Fermentation chapter)
1 tablespoon	Nutritional yeast
3 teaspoons	Salt
2 tablespoons	Agar-agar (dissolved in 200 ml of water)
2 tablespoons	Carrageenan (dissolved in 200 ml of water)

METHOD

1. Hydrate and ferment the almond flour: add mineral water to the almond flour until it has a porridge-like consistency, add a spoonful of kefir, blend in the blender and let ferment for 24 hours in a glass jar with a lid.
2. In a medium saucepan, combine the agar-agar and carrageenan with 400 ml of cold water.
3. Bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring constantly. Keep boiling for 2 minutes until fully incorporated and it turns into an almost liquid gum, similar to the soft-ball stage of candy syrup.
4. In the Vitamix or a powerful blender, add the fermented almond flour paste, the nutritional yeast, salt and the still-hot agar-agar mixture on top of everything.

5. Start blending on the lowest speed and gradually increase to maximum speed. Use the tamper to force it in. Blend until no lumps remain — agar lumps set inside the cheese looking like translucent plastic.
6. Pour into a round mold with a lid and place in the refrigerator. Refrigerate for at least 6 hours before unmolding.

Yield: 1 cheese of about 1120g

TIP *Presentation is everything. Besides flavor, a convincing Minas cheese has to look like a Minas cheese. After much searching, I found I could not get a mold that reproduced the characteristic checkered pattern on top — they were all smooth. The solution was to improvise: I found a silicone trivet, the kind you put on the table to rest hot pans on, that had exactly that pattern. Just place it at the bottom of the mold and pour the paste over it before refrigerating. Since Minas cheese made with agar doesn't stick much, unmolding is easy — the cheese comes out whole with a lovely checkered pattern on top. The silicone trivet is easy to wash and can be reused indefinitely.*

NUTRITION FACTS

Serving: 30 g (one slice) | Servings per recipe: ~37| Full recipe: ~1120g

Nutrient	Per serving
Energy	34 kcal
Protein	1.3 g
Carbohydrates	1.6 g
Total fat	2.8 g
Saturated fat	0.2 g
Dietary fiber	0.6 g
Sodium	190 mg

Values calculated from reference food composition tables (TACO/USDA). They may vary depending on the ingredients used.

Prato Cheese

Prato cheese was created in Brazil by Danish immigrants in the early twentieth century and quickly became one of the best-selling cheeses in the country. Its mild flavor and firm, slightly elastic consistency make it perfect for sandwiches and gratins. In this vegan version, cooked carrot provides the characteristic yellow color, while fermented cashews and palm fat recreate the creamy texture and slightly buttery flavor. A Brazilian cheese with an entirely plant-based soul.

INGREDIENTS

Amount	Ingredient
1 base batch	fermented cashew paste (2 cups of cashews blended with kefir — see the Fermentation chapter)
2 tablespoons	Nutritional yeast
3 teaspoons	Salt
20 carrot slices, 1 cm thick	Cooked carrot
2 tablespoons	Agar-agar (dissolved in 200 ml of water)
2 tablespoons	Carrageenan
1 cup	Palm or coconut fat

METHOD

1. Ferment the cashews for 24 hours.
2. Cook the carrots until completely tender. Drain.
3. In a medium saucepan, combine the agar-agar and carrageenan with 200 ml of cold water in total.
4. Bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring constantly. Keep boiling for 2 minutes until fully dissolved. The two should combine to form a hot, translucent, almost liquid gum.
5. In the Vitamix or a powerful blender, add the fermented cashew paste, carrots, nutritional yeast, salt, palm fat and the hot agar and carrageenan mixture, in that order; the hot agar will help melt the palm fat sitting on top and liquefy it.
6. With the blender on its lowest speed, start processing and gradually increase to maximum speed. Use the tamper to force it in. Blend until no lumps remain — agar lumps set inside the cheese looking like translucent plastic.
7. Pour into a rectangular mold and let cool. The carrageenan may cause some sticking — greasing is optional, and you will learn to judge after the first time. Refrigerate for 6 hours before slicing.

Yield: 1 cheese of about 1200 g

TIP *For an even firmer Prato cheese, add a spoonful of sweet cassava starch to the mixture to be blended. Keep in mind that this may make the paste denser and put more strain on your blender's motor.*

NUTRITION FACTS

Serving: 30 g (one slice) | Servings per recipe: ~26 | Full recipe: ~1200 g

Nutrient	Per serving
Energy	158 kcal
Protein	3.2 g
Carbohydrates	5.3 g
Total fat	14.6 g
Saturated fat	5.0 g
Dietary fiber	0.8 g
Sodium	228 mg

Values calculated from reference food composition tables (TACO/USDA). They may vary depending on the ingredients used.

German-Style Cheese

Imagine the green fields of Germany, the silence of barns full of large wheels slowly aging. Now imagine that flavor in something entirely plant-based. This cheese brings in sauerkraut — the quintessential German ferment — to create a unique acidity reminiscent of traditional European cheeses. Orange miso adds an extra layer of fermented umami. It is a cheese that tells a story of cultures meeting, of ferments that cross borders. Let it firm up well in the refrigerator before serving.

INGREDIENTS

Amount	Ingredient
1 base batch	fermented cashew paste (2 cups of cashews blended with kefir — see the Fermentation chapter)
2 tablespoons	Nutritional yeast
1 teaspoon	Salt
1 tablespoon	Sauerkraut (fermented cabbage)
2 tablespoons	Agar-agar (dissolved in 200ml of water)
1 tablespoon	Red miso

METHOD

1. Ferment the cashews for 24 to 48 hours.
2. Prepare the agar-agar in 200 ml of water: dissolve it and bring to a full boil for 2 minutes.
3. In the blender, add the fermented cashew paste, nutritional yeast, salt, sauerkraut, red miso and the still-hot agar-agar.
4. Blend, starting on the lowest speed and gradually moving up to maximum speed. Use the tamper to force it in. Blend until no lumps remain.
5. Taste and adjust the salt if you think it needs it — the sauerkraut and miso already contain sodium, so go carefully.
6. Pour into a round mold and refrigerate for at least 4 hours. This recipe uses only agar, without carrageenan, but the sauerkraut and miso can cause some sticking to the mold. Try using nonstick silicone molds.

Yield: 1 cheese of about 800 g

TIP *Sauerkraut is what sets this recipe apart. Use a good-quality sauerkraut; you can experiment with doubling the amount for a more distinctive flavor.*

NUTRITION FACTS

Serving: 30g | Yield: ~800g (~27 servings)

Nutrient	Per serving
Energy	65 kcal
Protein	2.4 g
Carbohydrates	4.2 g
Total fat	4.9 g
Saturated fat	0.9 g
Dietary fiber	0.5 g
Sodium	118 mg

Values calculated from reference food composition tables (TACO/USDA). They may vary depending on the ingredients used.

Almond Brie

Brie is the cheese of poets and lovers of good food. Creamy inside, with that white, edible rind outside, it is the symbol of French sophistication. This recipe comes in two versions: the spreadable tub version, soft and made with carrageenan only — perfect with toast, fruit or crackers; and the sliceable version, firmer, obtained by adding agar-agar. The base recipe described here is the tub version. For the sliceable version, simply add the agar as indicated in the ingredients and steps. In both cases, almond flour fermented with kefir creates a surprisingly complex flavor. Always serve at room temperature — cold hides the flavors.

INGREDIENTS

Amount	Ingredient
1 base batch	fermented almond flour paste (2 cups of flour blended with kefir — see the Fermentation chapter)
1 tablespoon	Nutritional yeast
2 tablespoons	Carrageenan in 200 ml of water
1 teaspoon	Salt
1 cup	Palm fat
2 tablespoons	Agar-agar in 200 ml of water (optional — use only for the firm, sliceable version)

METHOD

1. Prepare the fermented almond flour paste as described in the chapter *Fermentation* and set aside.
2. In a saucepan, dissolve the carrageenan in 200 ml of cold water. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, until it looks like a slightly translucent gel.
3. *(Sliceable version only)* Dissolve the agar-agar in another 200 ml of cold water and bring to a boil for 2 minutes. Combine with the carrageenan and mix well. Keep warm.
4. In the blender, add the fermented almond paste, palm fat, nutritional yeast and salt. Finally, pour in the still-hot gel mixture. Start on the lowest speed and gradually increase to maximum speed. Use the tamper to force it in and make sure the paste is completely smooth — agar lumps set inside the cheese looking like translucent plastic.
5. **Tub version (cream cheese):** pour into a glass container or a mold lined with plastic wrap. Refrigerate for at least 8 hours. Serve straight from the container, spread.
6. **Sliceable version:** pour into a round nonstick silicone mold or one lined with plastic wrap — the plastic wrap makes unmolding easier, since carrageenan tends to stick. Refrigerate for at least 8 hours, preferably overnight. Take out of the refrigerator 30 minutes before serving.

Yield: 1 cheese of about 1200 g for the sliceable version and 645 g for the cream cheese

TIP *A little raspberry jam on the side turns either version into a complete gourmet experience.*

NUTRITION FACTS

Serving: 30 g | Servings per recipe: ~40 | Full recipe, sliceable version: ~1200 g

Nutrient	Per serving
Energy	76 kcal
Protein	1.2 g
Carbohydrates	1.5 g
Total fat	7.6 g
Saturated fat	2.7 g
Dietary fiber	0.6 g
Sodium	60 mg

Values calculated from reference food composition tables (TACO/USDA). They may vary depending on the ingredients used.

Almond Cream Cheese

Simple, versatile and delicious, cream cheese is the cheese that shows up at breakfast, in the weekend cheesecake and on the Sunday bagel. This minimalist version made of almonds with nutritional yeast and agar is proof that sometimes the simplest recipe is the most elegant. The result is a smooth, slightly tangy cream that spreads easily and goes equally well with fresh fruit, aromatic herbs, a pinch of black pepper or a generous spoonful of jam.

INGREDIENTS

Amount	Ingredient
1 base batch	fermented almond paste (2 cups of almond flour blended with kefir — see the Fermentation chapter)
1 tablespoon	Nutritional yeast
1 teaspoon	Salt
2 tablespoons	Agar-agar (dissolved in 200ml of water)

METHOD

1. Hydrate and ferment the almond flour: add mineral water to the almond flour until it has a very moist, porridge-like consistency, add a spoonful of kefir, blend in the blender and let ferment for 24 hours in a glass jar with a lid.

2. Prepare the agar: dissolve it in 200ml of cold water and bring to a boil until it thickens slightly.
3. In the blender or food processor, blend the fermented almond paste, nutritional yeast and salt with a little water until you have a very smooth, creamy paste.
4. With the blender on its lowest speed, add the still-hot agar and gradually increase to maximum speed. Use the tamper to force it in. Blend until no lumps remain.
5. Transfer to a glass jar and refrigerate for at least 2 hours before serving.

TIP *Make your cream cheese your own: mix in chopped fresh herbs (chives, dill, basil) for a savory version, or add sugarcane molasses and lemon zest for a sweeter version.*

NUTRITION FACTS

Serving: 30g | Yield: ~600g (~20 servings)

Nutrient	Per serving
Energy	64 kcal
Protein	2.4 g
Carbohydrates	2.7 g
Total fat	5.3 g
Saturated fat	0.4 g
Dietary fiber	1.2 g
Sodium	119 mg

Values calculated from reference food composition tables (TACO/USDA). They may vary depending on the ingredients used.

Sandwich Cheese

This cheese was born out of necessity and became a classic. With a texture that is firm and soft at the same time, it is the perfect partner for any snack — grilled in a skillet, sliced on bread or simply eaten out of hand. Sweet cassava starch gives it that slightly springy consistency Brazilians love in queijo coalho, while carrageenan holds everything together. An honest, straightforward recipe that delivers exactly what it promises.

INGREDIENTS

Amount	Ingredient
1 base batch	fermented cashew paste (2 cups of cashews blended with kefir — see the Fermentation chapter)
1 tablespoon	Nutritional yeast
3 tablespoons	Sweet cassava starch
10 carrot slices, 1 cm thick	Cooked Carrot
1 teaspoon	Salt
1 tablespoon	Carrageenan
100 ml (half a cup)	Palm oil

METHOD

1. Dissolve the sweet cassava starch in half a cup of cold water, stirring well so it doesn't form lumps.
2. In the blender, blend the soaked cashews, carrot, nutritional yeast, salt, palm oil and the starch mixture until you have a smooth paste.
3. In a nonstick skillet, add the carrageenan to the blended paste. Cook over medium heat, stirring continuously with a spatula, until the mixture thickens and starts to pull away from the sides (about 8 to 10 minutes).
4. Quickly pour into a mold or individual molds. This recipe uses carrageenan without agar, which can make the cheese stick more to the mold — especially if it turns out softer and more watery. Greasing with a drizzle of oil is recommended here, but judge it by the result of your first batch.
5. Refrigerate for at least 4 hours before unmolding.
6. Serve sliced or grill it in a skillet — grilled, it is even more special.

TIP *This cheese is excellent grilled on a griddle with a drizzle of olive oil and fresh rosemary. Serve warm with rustic bread and cherry tomatoes for an unforgettable appetizer.*

NUTRITION FACTS

Serving: 30 g (one slice) | Servings per recipe: ~28 | Full recipe: ~850 g

Nutrient	Per serving
Energy	91 kcal
Protein	2.0 g
Carbohydrates	4.5 g
Total fat	7.8 g
Saturated fat	2.4 g
Dietary fiber	0.4 g
Sodium	87 mg

Values calculated from reference food composition tables (TACO/USDA). They may vary depending on the ingredients used.

Vegan Requeijão

Requeijão is creaminess in a jar. That glossy white spread that covers hot tapioca at breakfast, warm French bread at afternoon coffee, and becomes a pizza topping on lazy nights. This vegan requeijão uses the dynamic duo of tofu and fermented almond cheese to create a texture surprisingly similar to the original. Canola oil adds extra richness, while nutritional yeast provides that characteristic umami flavor. Blend well and taste — you'll want more.

INGREDIENTS

Amount	Ingredient
1/2 kg	Firm tofu
1 base batch	fermented almond paste (2 cups of nuts blended with kefir — see the Fermentation chapter)
2 coffee spoons (about ¾ teaspoon)	Salt
1/2 cup	Canola oil or extra virgin olive oil
1 tablespoon	Nutritional yeast

METHOD

1. Prepare the fermented almond paste in advance as described in the Fermentation chapter and have it ready before starting this recipe.
2. In the blender, blend the tofu, the nut cheese paste, salt, canola oil and nutritional yeast.
3. Blend on high speed for 2 to 3 minutes until you have a completely smooth, glossy, uniform cream. The fermented almond paste may contain more liquid and therefore more volume, which will strain the blender more; it is important to use the tamper vigorously and try to be quick so the motor doesn't overheat.
4. Taste and adjust the salt and olive oil as needed.
5. Transfer to sterilized glass jars and refrigerate. It keeps fresh for up to 10 days.

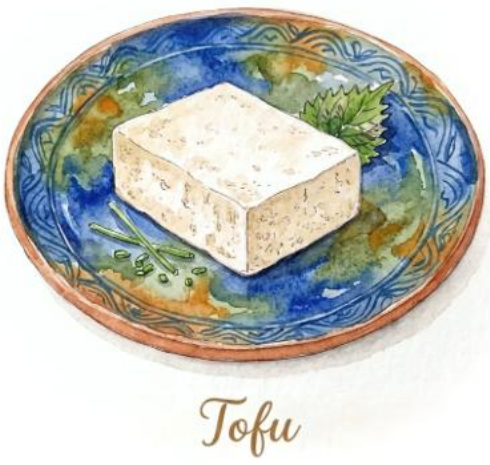
TIP *For a more intensely flavored requeijão, add 1 tablespoon of white miso and a few drops of lemon juice. The result is a creamy requeijão with real culinary personality.*

NUTRITION FACTS

Serving: 30 g (2 tablespoons) | Servings per recipe: ~34 | Full recipe: ~1018 g

Nutrient	Per serving
Energy	106 kcal
Protein	3.8 g
Carbohydrates	2.9 g
Total fat	9.6 g
Saturated fat	0.8 g
Dietary fiber	0.6 g
Sodium	116 mg

Values calculated from reference food composition tables (TACO/USDA). They may vary depending on the ingredients used



Specials and Accompaniments

Parmesan

There is a moment every cook knows: when you throw a handful of grated parmesan over a plate of hot pasta and that unmistakable aroma rises with the steam. This vegan version doesn't melt — and it doesn't need to. What it reproduces with surprising fidelity is everything else: the straw-yellow color, the fine grainy texture, the intense, slightly salty flavor that makes all the difference on the plate. The blend of almond and cashew flours with nutritional yeast and parmesan flavoring delivers exactly that. Keep it in a closed jar in the refrigerator and use it generously — life is too short to skimp on parmesan.

INGREDIENTS

Amount	Ingredient
500 g	Almond flour
500 g	Cashew flour (or almond flour)
2 tablespoons	Salt
6 tablespoons	Nutritional yeast
60 drops	Parmesan flavoring (optional)

METHOD

1. In a large bowl, combine the almond and cashew flours.
2. Add the nutritional yeast and salt and mix well with a spoon.
3. Count out the 60 drops of parmesan flavoring and distribute them throughout the mixture.
4. Mix vigorously with a spoon or spatula until you have a completely uniform, fragrant mixture.
5. Taste and adjust the salt as needed — the flavor should be slightly salty and intense, like the original parmesan.
6. Transfer to glass jars with lids and refrigerate. The parmesan keeps for up to 3 weeks.
7. Use generously on pasta, risottos, soups, salads and whatever else your heart desires.

TIP *Cashew flour is optional in this recipe — its only role is to lower the final cost. If you prefer to use only almond flour, the result will be even better: more delicate flavor, finer texture and more even color.*

NUTRITION FACTS

Serving: 15 g (1 tablespoon) | Servings per recipe: ~72 | Full recipe: ~1078 g

Nutrient	Per serving
Energy	84 kcal
Protein	3.0 g
Carbohydrates	4.0 g
Total fat	6.7 g
Saturated fat	0.8 g
Dietary fiber	1.1 g
Sodium	164 mg

Values calculated from reference food composition tables (TACO/USDA). They may vary depending on the ingredients used.

Sun-Dried Tomato

This is not a cheese recipe, but no book on vegan cooking would be complete without a good mayonnaise. This version uses tofu as a base to create a neutral, very smooth cream that sun-dried tomato turns into something absolutely glorious. Use it in sandwiches with the firm cheeses in this book, as a dip for snacks, mixed into salads or as a topping for savory pies. A bonus recipe that has become indispensable at the table.

INGREDIENTS

Amount	Ingredient
500 g	Firm tofu
80 ml	Rice or apple cider vinegar
1 teaspoon	Salt
100g	Seasoned sun-dried tomatoes packed in olive oil
150 to 200 ml	Canola oil (try 150ml first)

METHOD

1. Drain the tofu and remove excess liquid by pressing it with your hands or between clean cloths.
2. In the blender, blend the tofu, vinegar, oil and salt (just 1 teaspoon at first) on high speed until you have a completely smooth paste.
3. Oil absorption varies with the brand of tofu. Start with 150 ml and adjust gradually — if oil pools on top or the mixture curdles, reduce the amount. Do not go over the 200 ml called for in the recipe.
4. Add the sun-dried tomatoes and blend until you reach the consistency you want; if you blend for a long time they will disappear and the mayonnaise will turn reddish, and if you blend only briefly you will have little pieces throughout the sauce. Both have their uses, depending on what you want.
5. Taste and adjust the salt if needed by adding more pinches and blending again, tasting and repeating until it is right for you; do the same with the vinegar, adding extra tablespoons until it suits your taste.
6. Transfer to a glass jar and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes. The mayonnaise becomes firmer and tastier once chilled.

TIP *For an even richer version, replace half the tofu with soaked cashews. The result is a creamier mayonnaise with a slightly hazelnut-like flavor that goes wonderfully with sun-dried tomato.*

NUTRITION FACTS

Serving: 30 g (2 tablespoons) | Servings per recipe: ~28 | Full recipe: ~840 g

Nutrient	Per serving
Energy	80 kcal
Protein	1.8 g
Carbohydrates	1.2 g
Total fat	7.8 g
Saturated fat	0.7 g
Dietary fiber	0.3 g
Sodium	141 mg

Values calculated from reference food composition tables (TACO/USDA). They may vary depending on the ingredients used.

Tofupiry

Catupiry® is one of the most beloved icons of Brazilian cuisine — that generous white cream used in stuffed-crust pizzas and as a filling for coxinhas, and found in every good childhood memory. This vegan version uses tofu as its base, and the result is surprising: creamy, mild, very smooth, with a flavor that fools even non-vegans. Unlike most recipes in this book, Tofupiry doesn't need fermented nuts — tofu, oil, nutritional yeast and salt are enough to create something very satisfying. A practical, affordable option that works with what you can find in any city.

INGREDIENTS

Amount	Ingredient
1 block (500 g)	Firm tofu (soft also works, but makes it more watery)
150 ml	Canola oil or another vegetable oil
1 teaspoon	Salt
1 to 2 tablespoons	Nutritional yeast

METHOD

1. Drain the tofu and remove excess liquid by pressing it between clean kitchen towels.
2. Put all the ingredients in the blender or food processor: tofu, oil, salt and nutritional yeast. Watch the oil measurement: there may be a temptation to add more oil to make it go further, but in my experience that doesn't work — it won't incorporate into the mixture, which will look curdled with oil left over. If that happens to you, reduce the amount of oil in the recipe.

3. Blend on high speed until you have a completely smooth cream. To get it really smooth, use a high-power blender such as a Vitamix or similar.
4. Taste and adjust the salt.
5. Transfer to a glass jar and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes before serving. It keeps fresh for up to 5 days in the refrigerator.

TIP *Optional additions that work well: 50 ml of vinegar for acidity — but use it sparingly, because too much turns it into mayonnaise; 1 to 2 garlic cloves for those who like a bolder flavor; and if you have no nutritional yeast, a tablespoon of sour cassava starch is a good substitute, although it tends to make the mixture denser and heavier to blend. Tofupiry and vegan pizza were made for each other — if your favorite pizzeria doesn't yet offer a vegan option, send them this book. And if they already do, send it anyway — because there's always room for improvement.*

NUTRITION FACTS

Serving: 50 g | Servings per recipe: ~13 | Full recipe: ~655 g

Nutrient	Per serving
Energy	124 kcal
Protein	3.6 g
Carbohydrates	1.1 g
Total fat	12.2 g
Saturated fat	~0.9 g
Dietary fiber	0.3 g
Sodium	~120 mg

Values calculated from reference food composition tables (TACO/USDA). They may vary depending on the brand of tofu and oil used.

Vegan Butter

Everyone who has tried this butter has said the same thing: it is identical to butter made from cow's milk. The secret lies in a simple and very clever detail: cooked carrot. It plays two roles at once — it gives the characteristic golden-yellow color of real butter and also provides beta-carotene, the same pigment found in conventional butter, responsible for that appetizing golden tone. The carrot's slight natural sweetness makes all the difference to the final taste. It comes out of the blender liquid and golden, and sets in the refrigerator with the exact texture and behavior of a good butter: hard when cold, spreadable within a few minutes out of the refrigerator. For spreading on bread or for cooking — it works for both.

INGREDIENTS

Amount	Ingredient
1 and a half cups	Palm fat (or flavorless refined coconut oil)
Half a cup	Unflavored plant milk (no vanilla)
50 ml	Canola oil or another neutral vegetable oil
2 and a half teaspoons	Salt
6 slices	Well-cooked carrot (1 cm thick slices)

METHOD

1. Cook the carrot slices until very soft — they need to dissolve completely in the blender without leaving lumps.
2. Add the ingredients to the blender in this order: cooked carrots, plant milk, canola oil, salt and, last, the palm fat.
3. Blend on high speed until completely uniform and very smooth. The mixture will be quite liquid, with a lovely golden-yellow color.
4. Transfer immediately to butter dishes or containers with lids.
5. Refrigerate. The butter will set completely within a few hours.
6. Serve cold, or wait a few minutes out of the refrigerator for it to soften — behaving exactly like conventional butter.

TIP *For an even tastier, creamier version, replace the store-bought plant milk with homemade cashew milk: blend 1 cup of raw cashews with 3 cups of water. If you are using a Vitamix, there is no need to strain — the blender processes everything. With less powerful machines, strain out the residue left at the bottom before using. Some sources mention the need for soy lecithin as an emulsifier. In practice, it was never necessary — the mixture always emulsified without it. The usual caveat applies: use a high-speed blender like a Vitamix to make sure it comes out really smooth. With food processors or ordinary blenders, the emulsion may not be complete.*

NUTRITION FACTS

Serving: 15 g (approx. 1 tablespoon) | Servings per recipe: ~36 | Full recipe: ~537 g | Values based on the version made with homemade cashew milk

Nutrient	Per serving
Energy	89 kcal
Protein	0.1 g
Carbohydrates	0.3 g
Total fat	9.9 g
Saturated fat	4.2 g
Dietary fiber	0.1 g
Sodium	137 mg

Values calculated from reference food composition tables (TACO/USDA). They may vary depending on the ingredients used. The high saturated fat content comes from the palm fat — a nutritional profile similar to that of conventional butter.

Why This Book Is Free

There is a more personal reason behind this book that needs to be said before anything else. Ten years of artisan production means ten years of attempts, mistakes, adjustments, discoveries and a considerable number of cheeses that went in the trash before one turned out right. When I closed that chapter, I felt the need for all of it not to simply disappear — for the accumulated experience not to stay locked in a memory that time inevitably wears away.

Why only now? Because the years that followed were not easy. From January 2020 to May 2023, the pandemic reorganized the world and everyone's priorities. At the same time, I was closely by my mother's side through her illness — a cancer that demanded presence, attention and dedication until April 2024. These are experiences that consume not only time but also the inner space needed to create.

Now that the dust is beginning to settle, a sense of urgency has come with it: to write soon, before the details are lost, before memory fills the gaps with inventions. Writing this book was, above all, a way of closing this chapter with the certainty that something remained. That it was recorded, that it will be useful to others, and that it can be carried forward by hands I don't even know yet.

Many may wonder why someone would release for free on the internet a set of recipes developed over more than a decade of artisan work. The answer, after much thought, is simpler than it seems.

These recipes are not the Coca-Cola formula. Other books — such as those by Miyoko Schinner and other authors of international vegan cuisine — have already covered similar processes and results. What is here is not an industrial secret: it is knowledge that grows when it is shared. Keeping it to myself would be an illusion of control. Releasing it is the only decision that makes sense.

That said, I want to be absolutely honest about what this kind of product represents in the market — especially in the Brazilian market.

A product that belongs in the premium tier

From 2013 to 2023, I produced and sold artisan vegan cheeses based on fermented cashews and almonds. Ten years of real production — not theory, not a weekend experiment. And what I learned in that time is that this product, by its nature, belongs in the premium segment. It is expensive. And it has good reason to be.

Large-scale industrialization of this kind of cheese is a frontier that, to this day, only wealthy countries are trying to cross — the United States and a few European nations, where a strong currency makes it possible to absorb the cost of the ingredients and where consumers have the purchasing power to pay the final price. In Brazil, the picture is different.

There is a common illusion in entrepreneurial thinking: that scale automatically solves price. It doesn't. Industrializing a product like this requires many factors to converge at the same time — new processes, new technologies, new machinery and, above all, ingredients available in quantity and at an affordable price. Until that happens, cheese made from animal milk remains much cheaper, and nobody will pay three to five times more for something without understanding exactly why. It is no accident that the large plant-based manufacturers in Brazil don't make a cheese like the ones in this book. It is not a lack of interest or knowledge — they simply could not sell it in a market with the economic profile we have.

Where there is real room

That does not mean there is no opportunity. There is — but it is a specific opportunity, and understanding it correctly is essential for anyone thinking of starting a business in this area.

The audience that can buy this product exists: wine and gourmet food lovers, residents of large cities where income is more concentrated, and people sympathetic to veganism and plant-based eating who value the artisan process and are willing to pay for quality. Serving this audience consistently, on a small scale, is possible. Building a sustainable business from it is too. But let it be clear: this is not a path to getting rich, especially in Brazil. Expectations of return need to be calibrated to that reality.

After the bubble: feet on the ground

Since the so-called "vegan bubble" burst in 2019, the movement as a whole has had to rethink its strategies. Veganism has not ended — far from it. But it will have to mature under pressure to face the challenges of the post-bubble period. The flow of investment, once more generous, has become more cautious. The pace of expansion, slower. And this is, to some extent, healthy — movements that grow too fast without a solid foundation tend to retreat just as quickly.

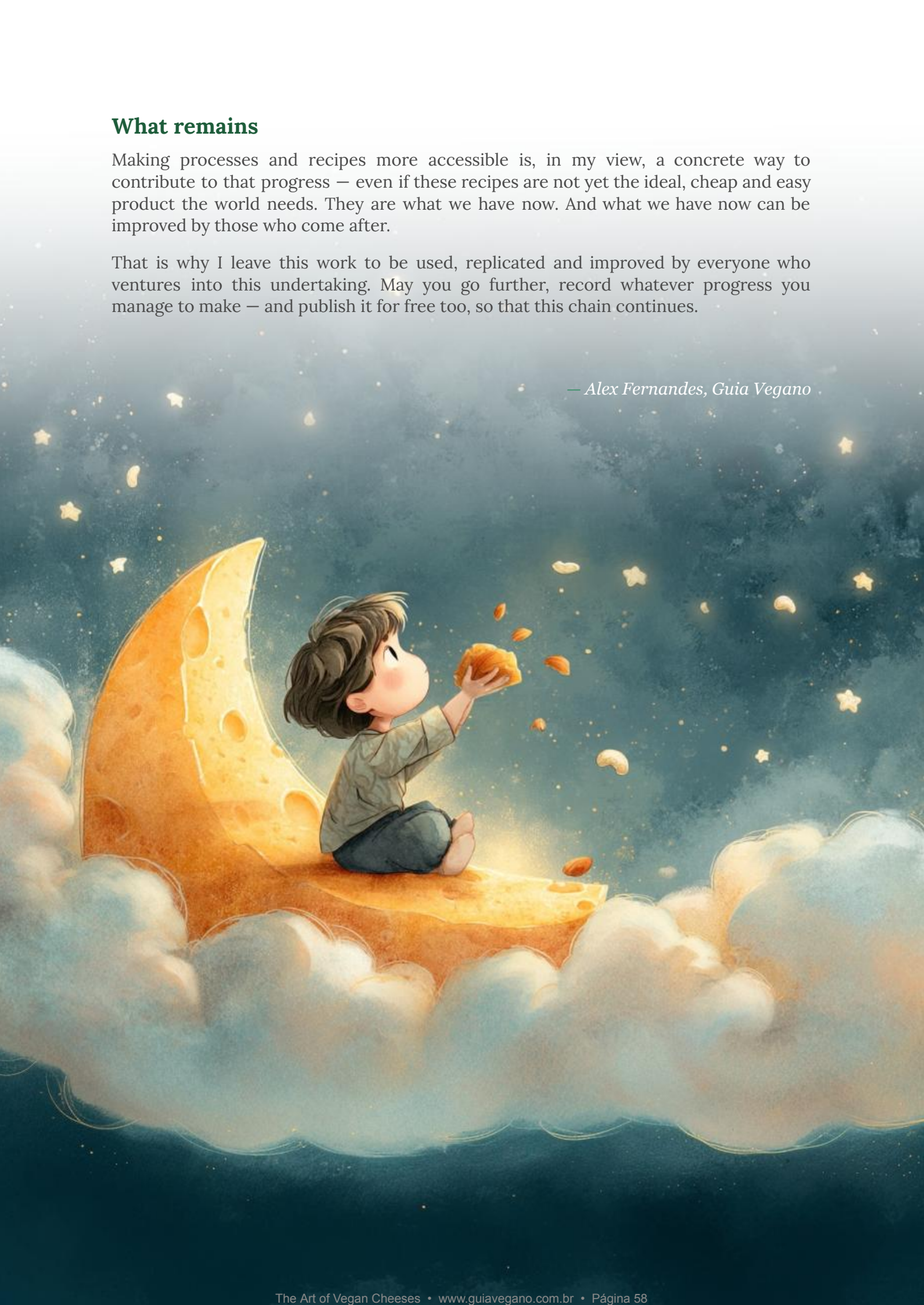
The imperative to move toward fairer and more sustainable food systems remains intact. What changes is the pace — and the awareness that this is not a linear process but long-term work.

What remains

Making processes and recipes more accessible is, in my view, a concrete way to contribute to that progress — even if these recipes are not yet the ideal, cheap and easy product the world needs. They are what we have now. And what we have now can be improved by those who come after.

That is why I leave this work to be used, replicated and improved by everyone who ventures into this undertaking. May you go further, record whatever progress you manage to make — and publish it for free too, so that this chain continues.

— Alex Fernandes, Guia Vegano



About Guia Vegano

Guia Vegano is a project dedicated to providing reliable, free and well-grounded information on veganism, animal ethics, nutrition, the environment and activism. Its purpose is to help people and groups make more conscious decisions, strengthening a vegan movement that is coherent, critical and committed to the liberation of every animal.

Beyond this book, at Guia Vegano you will find articles on animal ethics and philosophy, writing on vegan nutrition and health, content on activism, the environment and politics, and a podcast with interviews, analysis and reflections.

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