

Sonora Thin Whole Wheat Crackers and Wraps



Crackers give us a welcome variation on the theme of bread with crust and soft crumb at the beginning of dinner, at breakfast, as a snack, as a carry along emergency food and as a party socializer.

Perhaps the finest crackly thin crackers are made in Sardinia, *Pane Carasau*, from a thin disc of dough baked briefly near the flame in a wood fired oven until it balloons. The balloon of ultrafine dough is flattened and split open to give two extremely thin discs that are then dried almost instantly in another pass into the wood fired oven. The result is a paper-thin cracker with a history in Sardinia, of being the food of shepherds, together with sheep milk cheese. I've tried making *Pane Carasau* at home using an electric broiler instead of the wood fired oven, and it works if all the delicate details are managed. Only later did I appreciate why they stack the newly baked crackers while they are still very slightly soft, and weight them on top; this is to make them evenly flat for neat packaging. However, I really like *Pane Carasau* crackers so I was relieved to discover a reasonably simple way to produce whole wheat crackers quite close in texture to *Pane Carasau*. Sonora wheat mildly treated with sourdough makes a thin whole grain cracker with a naturally buttery flavor that I now aim to always have on hand.

Perhaps the most daunting part of the process is rolling out very thin dough, but this becomes easy with a pasta roller machine and dough made with exactly the right moisture content. If there are children around you will find willing help in turning the handle of the pasta roller. Mixing the very stiff dough can also be made very quick and easy by using a food processor. Baking is very easy; one minute or less between the flat plates of an electric waffle maker-grill.

Then as a bonus these crackers can be converted into soft bread wraps, similarly to lavash cracker bread. The conversion is brought about by briefly immersing a cracker in water, dripping off the excess water and steaming for a few seconds for a warm wrap, or just waiting until the cracker becomes flexible enough to roll up around the filling, usually 5 – 10 minutes for an unheated filled wrap.

To make approximately 16 crackers:

Ingredients	Bakers percent	Grams	Ounces
Stone ground whole wheat Sonora flour	100	250	8
Enzyme active malted wheat flour* (optional)	1	2.5	0.08
Extra Virgin Olive oil	4	10	0.32
Salt	1.5	3.8	0.12
Water	35 - 45	87.5 – 112.5	2.8 – 3.6
Simple sourdough**	10	25	0.80

* See *Wheat Sprouts 2008* at www.wholegrainconnection.org

** See *Simple Whole Wheat Sourdough Starter* at www.wholegrainconnection.org

Cracker dough preparation

[] Add whole wheat flour and enzyme active malt to food processing bowl fitted with a metal blade.

[] Make a well in the flour and add the olive oil. Process the flour and olive oil until evenly incorporated. Scrape down the sides of the bowl and repeat the processing if necessary. *The mix will look like very fine breadcrumbs.*

[] Separately dissolve the salt in the water and disperse the sourdough starter in the salty water. *Use the smallest amount of water on your first attempt and note the actual amount of water needed with each particular flour.*

[] Add the water mixture to the flour mixture in the food processor and process until evenly mixed. *The resulting mixture will look like coarse breadcrumbs.*

[] Transfer the mixture to a bowl and by hand press the mixture into four balls of dough equal in weight, each approximately the size of a large egg. Transfer the dough balls to a plastic bag and close around the dough so that the dough stays moist.

[] Allow the dough to rest at room temperature for 4 - 8 hours. *After that if it is not convenient to continue working with the dough, refrigerate it at 40°F until you are ready to roll the crackers.*

Rolling the cracker dough

[] Working with one dough ball at a time: Briefly knead the dough ball.

[] On a smooth wooden board, and with the aid of a simple tapered rolling pin and a dough scraper, press and roll out the dough into a rectangle approximately 5 x 4 inches, and thickness such that it can pass through the first roller position of your pasta rolling machine. *Note that the dough should be neither crumbly nor sticky. Crumbly dough can be corrected by sprinkling on water, followed by cutting the dough sheet in half and stacking the pieces and re-rolling and shaping to a rectangle on the board. This is repeated until a smooth firm non-sticky texture is produced. Sticky dough may be corrected by adding flour, but the finished product will likely be tough or grainy in texture. Normally care is taken to add neither water nor flour, after the first mixing of the dough.*

[] Pass the dough through the first position of your rolling machine, position "0".

[] Return the dough piece to the board and cut it in half with the dough scraper. Stack the pieces and tidy the edges into a rectangle approximately 5 inches wide. Send this dough piece through the rolling machine again, still in position "0".

Repeat this cutting, stacking and rolling perhaps 5 or 6 times, until a really neat

smooth rectangle of dough is produced through the first position of the rolling machine. *Alternate sending narrow edge and wide edge through the roller. End with passage of the wide edge.*

[] Pass the dough piece through the rolling machine, successively through roller positions 1 – 6. *You may find that you can use just the 2, 4, and 6 positions.*

[] Cut the dough sheet in half and pass each dough sheet through positions 7, 8 and 9. *You may find you can use just the positions 8 and 9.*

[] Cut the dough pieces in half to produce four crackers each approximately 5 x 9 inches.

[] Lay the dough pieces on a cloth and cover with a cloth until they are due to be baked.

Cracker baking method using an electric wafflemaker - grill with alternative smooth baking plates

[] Prepare the smooth baking plate option on your electric wafflemaker. Preheat to the highest setting according to manufacturers instructions.

[] Slide a prepared dough sheet onto the bottom hot plate and close the top hot plate over the dough piece. Bake for up to one minute. *Ideally these crackers show little or no browning.*

Or

[] If you have an open style griddle, bake each cracker approximately 30 seconds on each side.

[] Allow the crackers to cool on a wooden rack. *Or stack the crackers as they are made, under a board with weight on top.*

[] Store in an airtight container.

Optional extra crisping for crackers

[] Dry the crackers further if necessary, in a food dehydrator* set at 140°F for 3-6 hours. **E.g. Nesco /American Harvest*

Converting crackers into wraps

[] Briefly but completely submerge each cracker in water.

[] Lay the soaked cracker on a plate or board, covered with a plate, and wait for 5-10 minutes before filling.

Or

[] Briefly but completely submerge each cracker in water.

[] Steam wet cracker just long enough, a few seconds, to make the cracker completely pliable, before filling.

