

Broccoli & Cheddar Cheese

My Healthier Take On Panera's Broccoli Cheddar Soup

So, one of the first soups that I tried making for this new soup section is Panera's broccoli cheddar soup. I started looking into "skinny" recipes for that soup, it blew my mind at just how un-skinny they actually were. Most had 2-3 cups of cheese and a junkload of half and half. Seriously?

I up the flavor by roasting the broccoli florets, then I out smart the soup by using almond milk, thickened with cornstarch. For the cheese, I melt in low point cheddar cheese slices. I've also included notes for using fat free and reduced fat cheddar cheese.



Ingredients:

- 4lb broccoli heads, florets trimmed, set stems aside.
- butter flavored cooking spray
- 1 Tbsp I Can't Believe It's Not Butter Light
- 1 large onion, diced
- 1 cup celery, diced
- 1 cup shredded carrots (5oz), measured, then chopped
- 1 medium clove garlic, chopped
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp black pepper
- 1/2 tsp garlic powder
- 1/2 tsp onion powder
- 1/2 tsp celery salt
- 6 cups fat free chicken stock
- 3-1/2 cups unsweetened plain almond milk
- 4 Tbsp cornstarch, dissolved in 1/4 cup water
- 5 slices "Borden" brand, fat free sharp cheese singles
- 2 tsp cheese flavored popcorn seasoning sprinkles
(OPTIONAL, but adds good flavor for 0 points. I used Kernell's brand.)

Directions:



- 1 Trim the broccoli florets from the stems. Place the florets in 1 large bowl, then trim and dice the stems into bite sized pieces. Set aside in a separate bowl. Place the florets into a gallon sized ziplock bag with 2 Tbsp of water. Poke a hole in the bag, then microwave for 3 minutes. You'll need to do this in 2 batches, as there's a lot of broccoli florets. Set aside.

Serving Info.:

YIELDS: 15 cups
Servings: 10
Serving Size: 1-1/2 cup

Points:

	G	B	P
1 serving =	1	1	1
2 servings =	3	3	3
3 servings =	4	4	4
4 servings =	6	6	6



- 2 Preheat your oven to 450 and line a sheet pan with foil paper. Place the florets, NOT THE STEMS, onto the pan. Spray with butter flavored cooking spray, season lightly with salt and pepper, then roast at 450 degrees for 20 minutes. Set aside.



- 3 Heat a large pot over medium-high heat for around 1 minute, then spray with butter flavored cooking spray and add the butter spread, onion, celery, carrots, garlic and chopped broccoli stems. Cook on medium high heat for 8-10 minutes. Add the salt, pepper, garlic powder, onion powder, celery salt, stock and almond milk. Bring to a boil.



- 4 Rough chop the roasted broccoli florets, to break them down, then place into the pot, along with the cheese. Stir till the cheese melts.



- 5 Stir in the dissolved cornstarch, then reduce the heat to a low boil. Cook the soup at a low boil for 20 minutes, then turn off the heat. Use an immersion blender to process the soup, blending up some of the chunks to give it a thicker and more creamy texture. Don't COMPLETELY blend it up, you want to keep some chunks in there too.



- 6 For a more cheesy flavor for 0 points, add the cheese flavored popcorn sprinkles. Season with additional salt and pepper if desired. Done.

NOTES:

CHEESE OPTIONS:

- There are a couple of different ways you can mess with the cheese in this recipe. First off, my base-recipe has 3 points of cheese in it. You can tweak that a few ways. I NORMALLY use Kraft fat free shredded cheddar cheese, which I get at Walmart. If you can get it, you can use up to 1-3/4 cup of it in the soup for 3 points. I used Borden's because you get 5 slices of cheese for 3 points and I didn't want to drive to Walmart. If you would prefer to use reduced fat shredded cheddar, you can use up to 6 Tablespoons (or 1.5oz by weight) to keep the first serving of soup at 1 point.
- Broth: If you use reduced sodium broth, the soup will taste very bland and may need to be more aggressively seasoned. I used fat free broth, because it was lower in points.
- If you are allergic to almond milk, you can substitute it with any low fat, white/thick liquid you prefer, but adjust points accordingly. If you have a Kroger affiliated store near you, look for "Carbmaster" brand lactose free milk. It is thick, like almond milk and is the same points.
- After this soup sits in the fridge overnight, it tightens up a little bit. Thin it with additional water, if necessary.

