

Christmas Tree Bread Sensory Recipe

Rolling the dough into balls, filling them with cheese, and building a tree shape makes this recipe a tactile experience for the whole family to enjoy

One of our teachers makes this recipe every Christmas as an appetizer for her holiday party. Her daughter who is visually impaired helps her roll the dough and stuff each one with cheese.

We also like how there's so much easy math in this recipe. You can count the balls as you are rolling them. "One, two, three, let's make a tree!" With older siblings, talk about how eight cheese sticks become 32 pieces and how to form the perfect Christmas tree shape with 32 balls of dough.

When the bread is warm out of the oven, pull the balls apart from the tree and dunk each one in pizza sauce, Ranch dressing, or your other favorite dip.

Happy holidays!






Recipe courtesy of Amanda's Cookin' (<https://amandascookin.com/>).








Utensils

- One baking sheet
- Parchment paper or a silicone baking mat
- Cutting board
- A dinner knife or kitchen scissors
- Small, microwaveable bowl
- Pastry brush







Ingredients





- 4 string cheese mozzarella sticks
- 4 Colby-Monterey Jack cheese sticks
- 16 oz. can Pillsbury Grands biscuits (8 count)
- 2 tablespoons butter
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon Italian seasoning or rosemary
- 2 tablespoons chopped parsley
- 3 tablespoons finely grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 cup pizza sauce or other dip of your choice

Recipe	Suggested Sensory Directions
<p>1. Gather the ingredients and utensils. Preheat the oven to 375F.</p>	<p> What do the utensils feel like? Are their textures rough, smooth, or shiny? The bread dough comes in a tube that you can hold with both hands.</p> <p> When you tap the baking sheet with your fingers, does it make a sound?</p> <p> When you put the parchment paper on a shiny baking sheet, there's no reflection anymore. Hold a piece of parchment paper up to your eyes. This is what some children who are visually impaired might see.</p>

Recipe	Suggested Sensory Directions
<p>2. Open each package of cheese sticks and take out four sticks from each. Unwrap each stick and put it on your cutting board.</p>	<p> Count out loud each stick of cheese. “One, two, three four.” Four plus four more cheese sticks is eight!</p> <p> As you peel off each wrapper, use verbal descriptions to describe how the cheese is INSIDE the wrapper, then you peel the wrapper OFF, and the cheese is OUTSIDE the wrapper. It even makes a tearing sound as you pull the wrapper away from the cheese.</p> <p> What other foods do you have to peel? A banana!</p> <p> Talk about the color of the cheese. One cheese is orange. The cheese is easier to see on a colored cutting board. It’s also the perfect shape for small hands to snack on.</p>
<p>3. Cut each stick of cheese into four pieces so you make 32 pieces. Set them aside.</p>	<p> Since the cheese isn’t hard to cut, you don’t need to use a sharp knife. As you hold a dinner knife encourage your child to hop on top of your hand as you cut each piece of cheese into fourths.</p> <p> Count out loud as you cut the cheese. “One, two, three, four!” Try counting backwards too! How many pieces of cheese will you have after you’ve cut eight cheese sticks into fourths? Compare a whole stick of cheese to the smaller pieces to learn about the concepts of “whole” and “half,” or “big” and “little.”</p> <p> Peel another stick of cheese and take a bite while you prepare this recipe. The mild flavor makes it a popular snack for little kiddos.</p>

Recipe	Suggested Sensory Directions
<p>4. Open the tube of biscuit dough and separate the dough into eight biscuits. Cut each biscuit into fourths so you have 32 pieces of dough.</p>	<p> Time to talk about peeling again as you pull the wrapper off the can of dough. The dough is INSIDE the can. When you pierce the can with a knife, the dough expands OUTSIDE the can. The can might POP! Did you hear it?</p> <p> You can explain how bread rises because it's made with a living organism called baker's yeast. It makes bread rise and become lighter and softer. A cracker isn't made with yeast so it's flat and crispy.</p> <p> There are now eight circles of dough. Circles are round. What other items are round in your kitchen?</p> <p> Using hand under hand, encourage your child to hop on top of your hand while you cut the biscuits into fourths with a gentle, sawing motion. Or, try cutting the dough with kitchen scissors.</p>
<p>5. Roll each piece of dough into a ball and set the balls aside on your work surface.</p>	<p> What does the dough feel like? Is it sticky? Soft? It won't feel like "real" bread until after it's baked.</p> <p> Sniff the dough. It smells like bread.</p> <p> Rolling dough is a fun way to build your child's tactile skills. If your child is sensitive to new tactile experiences, try putting the dough into a plastic sandwich bag and have your child roll, pat, or squeeze the dough when it's inside the bag.</p>

Recipe	Suggested Sensory Directions
<p>6. Push a piece of cheese into the center of each ball, pinch the seams together, and then roll the dough into a ball again to seal it up.</p>	<p> Many hands make light work in this recipe. Invite other family members to help you add the cheese to the biscuits and roll the balls.</p> <p> Use verbal descriptions to explain how you're putting the cheese INTO the ball, covering it up with dough (where's the cheese?), and rolling the dough into a ball. Does the dough roll like a bouncy ball or the wheel on a truck? Or does it stick to the parchment paper until it's time to eat?</p> <p> Time for another bite of cheese!</p>
<p>7. Arrange the balls on the baking sheet into a Christmas tree shape, starting with one ball at the top, then two balls, three balls etc., leaving four balls at the bottom to make a tree trunk.</p>	<p> Use the hand under hand strategy and ask your child to help you build the Christmas tree shape.</p> <p> What shape is your tree? It doesn't have to be a perfect triangle. Trees come in all shapes and sizes.</p>
<p>8. Melt the butter in a small dish in the microwave oven and stir in the seasonings. Brush the biscuit balls with the butter mixture.</p>	<p> Tools play an important role in daily activities. A pastry brush is a fun utensil because you can paint almost anything with it. First, let your child touch and grasp it from the handle to the brush on the end. Then allow them to move the brush over your work surface or their feeding tray. Try dipping the brush into water and painting the surface until it's wet. Then you're ready to paint the biscuit balls with the melted butter.</p>

Recipe	Suggested Sensory Directions
<p>9. Bake the biscuit balls for 15-17 minutes or until golden brown. Remove from oven and sprinkle with parsley and Parmesan cheese. Let the bread cool a bit before serving it with warm pizza sauce or your favorite dip.</p>	<p> Listen for the timer when the bread is done.</p> <p> Does your kitchen smell like fresh pizza? The oregano in the Italian seasoning gives this bread its Mediterranean aroma and flavor.</p> <p> Even when it's baked, the bread is still the shape of a Christmas tree.</p> <p> Pulling apart a ball of bread from the tree and dipping it into the sauce is just as much tactile fun as making this recipe!</p>
