Hardtack: Flour, Water, and Salt Crackers



Hardtack is flour and water baked until there's no moisture left in it. Sailors and soldiers lived on it for centuries because it keeps for years with no fridge, no can, and no fat to go rancid. It's hard as a brick on purpose, so soak it in coffee, soup, or broth before you eat it. This is how I make it: flour, water, and a little salt for flavor.

OVEN	BAKE	YIELD
375°F	60 min	9
no grease on the pan	30 minutes a side	3 inch crackers

4 cups Flour

Up to 1 1/2 cups Water

Plus 3 tsp salt if you want it. It's there for flavor, not to preserve anything.

CALORIES
About 200 per cracker, about 1,820 in the batch

PROTEIN
About 6 g per cracker

HOW TO EAT IT
Soak it in coffee, soup, or broth first. It's too hard to bite dry

BEST STORAGE
Mylar with an oxygen absorber, cool and dry, 10+ years

⚠ **BIGGEST RISKS** Crackers that aren't dry all the way through, and moisture or bugs getting in after

INGREDIENTS

- ☐ **4 cups** Flour
- ☐ **Up to 1 1/2 cups** Water
- ☐ **3 tsp** Salt
  optional, used for flavor not preservation

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Oven
- Mixing bowl
- Rolling pin
- Knife
- A skewer, chopstick, or toothpick
- Ungreased baking sheet
- Wire rack

Nutrition estimate

Serving: 1 cracker (about 60 g) · 9 per batch

	Per cracker	Whole batch
Calories	**200**	**1,820**
Fat	0.5 g	5 g
Protein	6 g	52 g
Carbohydrates	42 g	380 g
Fiber	1.5 g	14 g
Sodium	about 780 mg	about 7,000 mg

STEPS

1. **Heat the oven.** Preheat the oven to 375°F.
2. **Mix and knead.** Mix the flour and salt together, then add up to 1 1/2 cups of water. The dough shouldn't be too sticky to work with. If it is, sprinkle on a little more flour as you knead, no more than 1 Tbsp. Knead by hand until it's thoroughly mixed.
3. **Roll it out.** Roll the dough into a square about 1/2 inch thick.
4. **Cut the squares.** Cut it into 3 inch squares.
5. **Poke the holes.** Use a skewer, chopstick, or toothpick to press 9 holes in each cracker, all the way through to the bottom.
6. THE STEP THAT MAKES IT KEEP
   Bake, flip, bake. Place the crackers on an ungreased baking sheet, not touching, and bake for 30 minutes. Flip them and bake another 30 minutes.
7. **Cool completely.** Take them out of the oven and let them cool completely on a wire rack.

ABOUT THESE NUMBERS

These are estimates based on USDA values for all-purpose flour at 125 g a cup, split across 9 crackers, with all 3 tsp of salt. Leave the salt out and the sodium drops to almost nothing. Your numbers will shift with how many crackers you cut.

HOW LONG IT KEEPS

Open on the counter	a few weeks
Zip bag, pantry	6 to 12 months
Airtight tin or jar, cool and dry	1 to 2 years
Vacuum sealed, cool and dry	5+ years
Mylar with an oxygen absorber, cool and dry	**10+ years**

What ends it is moisture and bugs, so keep it sealed, cool, and dry.

BEST PRACTICE

Leave the crackers out on the rack overnight so the last of the moisture leaves, then seal them in Mylar with an oxygen absorber or vacuum seal them. Label with the date and store cool and dry. Keep a jar out for eating.

SIGNS IT'S GONE BAD

Mold, dark spots, a musty smell, or crackers that bend. Moisture got in. **Webbing, small holes, or weevils in the container.** Bugs got in. **Toss it either way.**