

# Chef's Corner: Kickin' Cajun Jack-n-Cheese Dip

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*Next time you put quality fish on the grill, be sure to cook some extra fillets for this family-tested, fisherman-approved party favorite! Ho-Ho-Ho!*

We know the summer is on the way when we break out the FoodSaver and stock-up on some quality offshore fish courtesy of Captain Andy Piland and Good Times Sportfishing charters out of Hatteras Harbor!

During the 2018 Annual Germanos Family Offshore Adventure, our band of hooligans boated a limit of 60 Mahi before 7:20 a.m. and a limit of Greater Amberjack, Lesser Amberjack, and Almacos Jack by 9:00 a.m.!

We also added several False Albacore to the box on the way back (don't believe the negative hype - False Albies are great table fare, too!).

Needless to say, our family eats a lot of high-quality fish every summer, and this delicious dip is a staple whenever we grill the Bounty of the Sea outdoors – be it at home in Virginia Beach, or at our cottage in Cape Hatteras, NC.

This “Kickin’ Cajun Jack-n-Cheese Dip” is ideal for snacking on the beach and entertaining family and friends all summer long (winter, too)! We plan to have a nice AJ slab pre-grilled for this great dip and our family Christmas feast Good Times indeed!



*Grilled Mahi and Almacos Jack with fresh Sweet Corn*



*Almacos Jack Fillets Reserved for the Dip!*

While this particular variation used Almacos Jack, I have had great results with leftover grilled Mahi, Wahoo, and Amberjack (AJ). I would not hesitate to substitute grilled Spanish Mackerel, Bluefish, Stingray, Halibut, or another thick fillet. The key is quality leftovers, and that begins by not over-cooking the grilled fillets the day before!

## **Ingredients:**

2 packages, Kraft's Philadelphia Cream Cheese

2 grilled & chilled ~12-ounce Almacos Jack filets (these were seasoned with a Cajun shake while grilling)

2 tablespoons capers, chopped lightly to break up just a bit

1 medium onion, finely chopped

Hand-squeezed juice from ½ lemon (more or less to suit your palate – I’m Greek, so lemon is a must for me!)

2 teaspoons Tabasco Sauce (more or less to taste)

1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce

4 healthy dollops of sour cream (I have used plain Greek yogurt as well – works just fine!)

2 tablespoons of mayonnaise (helps smooth-out the texture so it doesn’t break the crackers when dip is chilled)

1 Ghost Pepper, seeded and finely chopped (optional) – use a ½ pepper if you want to ratchet it down a bit

I have also crushed and finely chopped a clove of garlic in some variations of this recipe – great for us garlic lovers!

**NOTE:** Most of these ingredients can be easily scaled up or down based on the amount of fish you have.

## Directions:

Allow cream cheese to soften at room temperature while you prepare all other ingredients. This will make whipping the ingredients go much smoother – pun intended!

Remove all charred skin and residual pin bones from the chilled Jack fillets, and coarsely chop the separated meat.

In a large mixing bowl, combine softened cream cheese, fish, onions, capers, chopped pepper, and all other ingredients.



Mix thoroughly until all ingredients have been whipped into a smooth, homogeneous spread.

I typically use a potato masher to help break down the fish and speed-up the mixing process. It will start slowly and look like too much fish, but as you continue to mash everything together, it will become remarkably creamy and smooth.

I have found that the sour cream, mayo, and lemon juice really create a great overall texture, even when chilled!

Chill to set the spread and allow flavors to meld – 30 minutes recommended, more is fine.



*I really like a glass mixing bowl – not sure why – I guess it's all transparent to me!*



*Voila! The end result is a kickin' dip with tons of flavor and versatility to serve friends and family alike!*

***There are many great ways to serve this tasty and versatile dip/spread.***

Here are a few of my favorites:

- Spread on Wheat Thins, Triscuits, or Ritz Crackers, and snack away – the bowl will be empty in no time!
- Buy a hearty loaf of French bread or crusty artisan bread; slice & toast til nicely crisp and brown, and spread dip on the toast – butter is optional as the dip is typically creamy enough without it!
- Use to fill Pepperidge Farm® Soft Country Style Dinner Rolls or King's® Hawaiian Sweet Rolls, and serve as party favors with toothpicks of olives and other cocktail treats! Makes a great platter this way.
- Serve with Corn Chip Scoops, Tortilla Scoops, or Pita Chips...sometimes simple is good!
- Stuffed Jalapeno Halves – basically, a jalapeno “canoe” with a Kickin’ Jack-n-Cheese crew!
- The imagination is the limit – try something new and let me know how it goes!

**TIP:** *When putting this out in a Christmas “party bowl,” a light dusting of paprika, parsley garnish, and a sprinkle of snipped chives make for a nice presentation!*

***Contributed by: CHAC member John Germanos, aka “The Instinctive Chef”***

