

## Strawberry Crackle Salad: The Addictively Crunchy Dessert Salad

addictive, crunchy pretzel-pecan layer



**OVEN**  
**400°F**

**TIME**  
**7-9 min**

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**SAVE**  
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### INGREDIENTS

- 2-3 cups fresh strawberries, diced
- 1 (8 oz) tub of Cool Whip, thawed
- 1 cup pretzels, chopped (mini twists work well)
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup pecans, chopped
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup brown sugar (packed)
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup melted butter
- 8 oz (1 package) cream cheese, softened
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

#### Swaps and Notes:

**Strawberries:** Fresh, ripe strawberries are ideal for flavor and texture. Ensure they are washed and thoroughly dried before dicing. You can use a bit more if you like a very fruity salad, up to 4-5 cups.

**Cool Whip:** Thawed Cool Whip provides the classic light and airy texture. While homemade whipped cream can be used, Cool Whip offers stability for this type of "salad."

**Pretzels:** Mini pretzel twists are easy to chop. You can crush them by placing them in a Ziploc bag and crushing with a rolling pin, or pulsing briefly in a food processor. Don't make them too fine; you want some texture.

**Pecans:** Chopped pecans add a lovely nutty crunch. Walnuts or even a mix of nuts could be substituted. For extra flavor, you can toast them lightly before chopping.

**Brown Sugar & Melted Butter (for crust):** This combination creates the "crackle" or praline-like crunch. Make sure the brown sugar is packed.

**Cream Cheese:** Ensure the cream cheese is truly softened to room temperature. This is essential for a smooth, lump-free cream cheese layer. Full-fat cream cheese is recommended for the best flavor and texture.

**Granulated Sugar (for cream cheese layer):** Adjust to your sweetness preference.

**Vanilla Extract:** Good quality vanilla enhances the creamy layer's flavor.

**Instructions:**

**Preheat Oven & Prepare Baking Sheet:** Preheat your oven to 400°F (200°C). Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper. Ensure your baking sheet has edges to prevent any buttery overflow.

**Prepare Strawberries:** Wash and dice your 2-3 cups of fresh strawberries. Set them aside.

**Make the Pretzel-Pecan Crunch:** In a medium-sized bowl, combine the 1 cup chopped pretzels,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup chopped pecans,  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup packed brown sugar, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup melted butter. Mix everything together thoroughly until the pretzels and pecans are well coated.

Spread this pretzel mixture evenly in a single layer onto the prepared parchment-lined baking sheet.

Bake in the preheated oven for 7-9 minutes. Watch it very carefully, as it can go from golden to burnt quickly. It should be bubbly and lightly golden-brown. Remove from the oven and set aside to cool completely. As it cools, it will harden and become "crackle"-like. Once cooled, break it into smaller, bite-sized pieces.

**Prepare the Cream Cheese Layer:** While the pretzel crunch is cooling, in a large mixing bowl, combine the 8 oz softened cream cheese,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup granulated sugar, and 1 teaspoon vanilla extract. Whip these ingredients together with an electric mixer (or vigorously with a whisk) until the mixture is light, fluffy, and smooth, with no lumps of cream cheese remaining.

Gently fold in the 1 (8 oz) tub of thawed Cool Whip into the cream cheese mixture until it's just combined and no streaks of Cool Whip remain. Do not overmix, as you want to keep the light, airy texture.

**Assemble the Salad:** This salad is best assembled just before serving to maintain the crunch of the pretzel layer. In a large serving bowl, gently fold the diced strawberries and the cooled, broken pretzel-pecan crunch into the cream cheese-Cool Whip mixture. You can reserve a small amount of the pretzel crunch and a few strawberry slices for garnish on top.

**Serve & Enjoy:** Stir gently until everything is evenly distributed. Serve immediately to enjoy the perfect balance of creamy and crunchy textures at their best.

**Tips for Success:**

**Completely Softened Cream Cheese:** This is the key to a smooth, lump-free cream cheese layer. Take it out of the fridge at least an hour before you start.

**Watch the Pretzel Crunch:** The pretzel mixture can burn quickly under high heat. Stay by the oven and pull it out as soon as it's golden and bubbly.

**Cool the Crunch Completely:** Ensure the pretzel-pecan crunch is totally cool and hardened before folding it into the cream cheese mixture. If it's warm, it will melt the cream cheese.

**Assemble Just Before Serving:** For optimal crunch, mix in the pretzel layer and strawberries right before serving. If made too far in advance, the pretzels can become soft.

**Dry Strawberries:** Make sure your diced strawberries are very dry after washing to prevent excess moisture from making the cream cheese layer watery.

**Serving Suggestions and Pairings:**

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15. **Serving Suggestions and Pairings:** Strawberry Crackle Salad is a fantastic dessert for almost any occasion! It's especially popular at potlucks, barbecues, summer picnics, and holiday meals. It's often served as a sweet side dish or the grand finale. Given its richness, it pairs well with lighter main courses. For other easy and fun desserts, check out my [This Easy Ice Cream Sandwich Cake Is My Favorite No-Bake Summer Dessert](#) or if you love a good dip, my [This Brownie Batter Dip Is My Favorite No-Bake Dessert For Instant Chocolate Cravings](#).
16. **Storage and Leftover Tips:** This "salad" is truly best enjoyed the day it's made to preserve the crunch of the pretzel layer. If you have leftovers, store them in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 1-2 days. The pretzel crunch will soften over time, but the flavor will still be delicious. To maximize freshness if making ahead, prepare the pretzel-pecan crunch and the cream cheese mixture separately. Store them both in airtight containers in the fridge, then combine with fresh strawberries just before serving.
17. **More Recipes You Will Love:** If you enjoy satisfyingly sweet and often indulgent desserts, here are some other Chefmaniac favorites:
18. For another rich, chocolatey treat that combines two favorites, you'll love [These Chocolate Chip Cookie Dough Brownie Bombs Are My Favorite Sweet Obsession](#).
19. If you're a fan of classic desserts, my [: The Best Peanut Butter Brownies I've Ever Made And I've Made A Lot](#) are a must-try.
20. And for a refreshing and unique no-bake pie with a minty twist, check out [This Grasshopper Pie Is My](#)

Favorite No-Bake Dessert With A Mint Chocolate Twist.

21. Final Thoughts: Strawberry Crackle Salad is a delightful symphony of textures and flavors - creamy, sweet, salty, and wonderfully crunchy. It's a recipe that perfectly balances indulgence with freshness, making it a beloved choice for any gathering. Give it a try, and prepare for it to disappear in a flash!
22. What are your favorite "dessert salads" or unique sweet and savory combinations? Share your ideas in the comments below, and don't forget to follow [Chefmaniac.com](https://chefmaniac.com) for more delicious recipes!

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**More recipes:** [ChefManiac.com](https://chefmaniac.com)

Original recipe: <https://chefmaniac.com/strawberry-crackle-salad-the-addictively-crunchy-dessert-salad/>