

The Pigskin

Serves 15 to 20

Pig out: This football is thrice infused with bacon—the jalapeño is cooked in bacon grease, there's bacon mixed into the cheese, and bacon covers the football.

- 1 ½ pounds sliced bacon
- 1 medium jalapeño, cored, seeded, and finely chopped (if you want extra heat in your cheese ball, retain some of the seeds)
- 16 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 1 cup shredded sharp white cheddar cheese, plus 1 tablespoon, for decorating
- 1 tablespoon chopped scallions
- Crackers, for serving

Cook the bacon: Preheat the oven to 400°F. Lay the bacon slices in a single layer on 2 baking sheets. Bake until crispy, 15 to 20 minutes. Drain the bacon on paper towels and let cool. Reserve 2 tablespoons of the bacon grease from the pans, and discard the rest. Once the bacon has cooled, coarsely chop and set aside.

Cook the jalapeño in the reserved bacon grease in a small skillet over medium heat until soft, about 5 minutes. Using a stand mixer or a bowl and a spatula, mix together 1 cup of the chopped bacon, the sautéed jalapeño, cream cheese, 1 cup of the cheddar, and the scallions until combined. Form the mixture into a ball and cover with plastic wrap; refrigerate for at least 2 hours or overnight.

Before serving, form the ball into an oblong football shape and roll in the remaining chopped bacon to coat. Decorate the top of the football cheese ball with the remaining 1 tablespoon cheddar to resemble laces.

Serve with crackers.