



Easy Cheesecakes

Recipes and Principles for Making
Perfect Cheesecakes



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Cheesecakes have stood the test of time. And well they should—they are wonderfully decadent desserts.

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The Versatile Cheesecake



Cheesecakes are versatile. They consist of three basic parts: the crust, the filling, and the topping. Knowing that, you can mix and match these parts into wonderful combinations. Using a vanilla filling, consider these combinations:

- A cherry vanilla cheesecake with a graham cracker crust
- A raspberry vanilla cheesecake with a chocolate crust
- A blueberry vanilla cheesecake with a gingersnap crust
- A strawberry vanilla cheesecake with a vanilla wafer crust
- An apple cinnamon cheesecake with a walnut crust

Of course, cheesecakes don't have to be made with vanilla filling. Chocolate and pumpkin fillings are favorites and you will find recipes for these in this guide. You will also find recipes for fruit fillings such as orange and

strawberry.

And of course, you can top your cheesecake with whatever you please. Consider the following toppings:

- Whipped cream
- Flavored whipped cream such as chocolate or strawberry
- Chocolate ice cream topping
- Caramel ice cream topping
- Fruit syrups made by heating jams or jellies
- Fruit pie filling
- Fresh fruits
- Fruit compotes made with fresh or frozen fruit

We hope that with this guide, you will mix and match fillings, toppings, and crusts to make wonderful cheesecakes.

You can see the possibilities.

How to Bake the Perfect Cheesecake

Cheesecakes have stood the test of time. And well they should—they are wonderfully decadent desserts. We'll give you principles to help you understand cheesecakes. If you understand the principles, you can create your own recipes. If you understand and practice these principles, chances are you will make wonderful cheesecakes.

Principle #1:

A cheesecake is a custard, not a cake. As a custard, the cheesecake should be thick, rich and creamy. As with any custard, a cheesecake relies on the proteins in the eggs to give it structure. The proteins coagulate as the temperature approaches 160 degrees. If it over bakes, the custard becomes dry.

Principle #2:

A long, slow bake allows for a more uniform internal temperature. Never bake over 350 degrees. We prefer a dark pan to uniformly absorb heat, not a reflective pan.

Principle #3:

Don't over bake your cheesecake. Most cheesecakes are over baked and they tend to be dry, not creamy. An over baked cheesecake tends to crack. The cheesecake is done when it is still jiggle but not soupy. The top of the cheesecake will jiggle as a whole and the center two inches will look softer. If the top is doing anything but just starting to blush a golden color, you have probably over baked the cheesecake. Do not stick a knife or a toothpick in the center. It is not a reliable test and it may start a crack.

Principle #4:

Beat the cream cheese until it is soft and smooth. It's easier to make a smooth mixture of the cream cheeses if you start with softened cream cheese. Take the cream cheese from the refrigerator at least an hour

before mixing. Beat the cheese with the paddle attachment, not the whip.

Principle #5:

Mix the ingredients into the cream cheese; don't whip the ingredients. If too much air is incorporated into the filling, the cheesecake will puff when baked and sink as it cools. With too much air incorporated into the filling, cracks are likely to develop.

Principle #6:

Custards tend to be soft and may weep. To give your cheesecake more structure, consider adding one to two tablespoons of cornstarch or flour. For a creamier cheesecake, leave the starch out.

Principle #7:

Cheesecakes rely primarily on eggs for the structure. Not only does the egg mixture have to reach 160 to 170 degrees to coagulate, but the filling must have enough eggs. In our experience, one egg per eight-ounce package of cream cheese plus a little milk or cream is about right.

Principle #8:

Cheesecakes are easier to remove from a pan after they have cooled slightly. Let the cheesecake cool for ten minutes and then with a spatula or thin-bladed knife, run the blade between the cake and the pan. If you let the cheesecake cool for any longer than that, it may start to contract and, with the cake stuck to the pan, crack. A nonstick pan not only makes the release easier but may help keep the cheesecake from cracking.

Use the Right Pan for the Perfect Cheesecake



Cheesecakes are so much easier and so much more fun with the right springform pans. And the right pan really does make a difference in the quality of the cheesecakes that you bake.

- Don't use light gauge, silver pans. You want a dark, heavy pan that will absorb heat and bake evenly.
- Use a nonstick surface. After baking that perfect cheesecake, you want a pan that will release cleanly and easily.

We absolutely love our [classy, glass-based springform pans](#). Not only are they heavy gauge and dark to absorb heat but they have a nonstick surface. The feature that we like best is the tempered-glass base. You can serve right from the base. With a smooth surface, you can cleanly remove each slice. We have used very sharp knives on our base and are yet to scratch the surface. As tough as we are on kitchen equipment, we think these will last for years.

Editor's Note: Since we wrote this e-book, springform pans have changed. While we still

like and use our [glass-based springform pans](#), we have become real fans of the new [silicone glass-based springform pans](#).

These silicone springform pans represent the greatest advance in springform pans since [square springform pans](#). With a "double seal" around the bottom, leakage is virtually eliminated. Now you can bake even batter cakes and desserts with a springform pan. The flexible ring peels off for neater, better-looking cakes and with silicone there is practically no clean-up. And it has a glass base so that you can cut right on the bottom.

How to Store Your Cheesecake

Cheesecakes are so good but so rich. Unless you have a big party, there's likely to be some left over. Here's what you can do with that too-good-to-waste cheesecake.

To refrigerate your cheesecake:

Wrapped in plastic, your cheesecake will last three days in the refrigerator. If you have an airtight container that you can put it in, it'll last five days.

To freeze your cheesecake:

Freeze individual slices and then wrap them in foil or plastic and place them in heavy freezer-type plastic bags. Slices will last for three weeks. You can freeze an entire cheesecake and it will last four to six weeks. Always store your frozen cheesecake in the freezer, not in the freezing compartment of your refrigerator where it is not as cold.

To unthaw your cheesecake:

Thaw your cheesecake overnight in the refrigerator. In a rush, individual slices can be thawed on the counter in thirty minutes.

Be creative! Choose your own crust!

Most cheesecake recipes call for a graham cracker crumb crust. But you can choose the crust you want on for your cheesecake:

Graham Cracker Crumb Crust Recipe

This recipe is sized for a nine or ten inch cheesecake but the same crust can be used for a pie.

- 2 cups [crushed graham crackers](#)
- 4 tablespoons sugar
- 5 tablespoons butter, melted

1. Crush the crackers. (The easiest way to create the crumbs is with a food processor.)
2. Mix the crumbs, sugar, and melted butter in a nine or ten-inch [springform pan](#). Press the mixture into a crust across the bottom of the pan and up the sides.
3. Put the crust in the refrigerator to set up while you prepare the filling.

Baker's note: There is now a wide variety of springform pans to choose from: round, glass base, square, heart-shaped, rectangular, and silicone. We prefer the silicone pans with their leak proof seals, easy release, and easy clean-up. [See all our springform pans.](#)

Chocolate Cookie Crumb Crust Recipe

This recipe is sized for a nine or ten inch cheesecake but the same crust can be used for a pie.

- 2 cups crushed chocolate cookie crumbs
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 5 tablespoons butter, melted

1. Crush the cookies. (The easiest way to create the crumbs is with a food processor.)
2. Mix the crumbs, sugar, and melted butter in a nine or ten-inch springform pan. Press the mixture into a crust across

the bottom of the pan and up the sides.

3. Put the crust in the refrigerator to set up while you prepare the filling.

Baker's note: There is now a wide variety of springform pans to choose from: round, glass base, square, heart-shaped, rectangular, and silicone. We prefer the silicone pans with their leak proof seals, easy release, and easy clean-up. [See all our springform pans.](#)

Gingersnap Crust Recipe

This recipe is sized for a nine or ten inch cheesecake but the same crust can be used for a pie. It makes a terrific crust for a peach pie.

- 2 cups crushed gingersnaps
- 1/2 cup finely [chopped nuts](#) (optional)
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 4 tablespoons butter, melted

1. Crush the gingersnaps. (The easiest way to create the crumbs is with a food processor.)
2. Mix the crumbs with the optional nuts, brown sugar, and melted butter in a nine or ten-inch springform pan. Press the mixture into a crust across the bottom of the pan and up the sides.
3. Put the crust in the refrigerator to set up while you prepare the filling.

Baker's note: There is now a wide variety of springform pans to choose from: round, glass base, square, heart-shaped, rectangular, and silicone. We prefer the silicone pans with their leak proof seals, easy release, and easy clean-up. [See all our springform pans.](#)

Suggestions for Less Fat in Your Cheesecake

Instead of an occasional indulgence, most of us would enjoy cheesecakes more often if we could reduce the fat. Here are some suggestions for doing so.

Use Neufchatel Cheese with 1/3 less fat. Your cheesecake may be little lighter and less dense but we doubt that your guests will be able to tell the difference.

If your recipe calls for whipped cream, use half and half in its place.

If your recipe calls for sour cream, use reduced fat sour cream. In our experience, fat-free sour cream does not bake well.

Reduce the amount of butter in the crust to as little as two tablespoons.

Use only a crust for the bottom of the cheesecake, not the sides. You can reduce the amount of the crust by half.

Questions and Answers about Your Cheesecake

How do I stop my cheesecake from cracking?

A cheesecake top without a crack seems to be the ultimate measure of success. It shouldn't be. A crack doesn't affect the taste. Many cheesecakes are topped and the topping covers any cracks.

There may be a number of reasons for cracks:

- Too much air incorporated into the filling may cause cracks.

- Too much baking time will over bake the filling and is a common cause of cracks.
- Uneven baking may be a cause. If you are using light gauge, reflective pans, consider switching to heavier gauge, dark pans.
- Too high of heat may cause cracking. Consider baking at 325 degrees instead of at 350 degrees.
- If your cheesecake cools too rapidly, it may develop cracks. Don't let your cheesecake cool in a draft.

Cheesecakes with starch in the filling are less prone to cracking.

What's the best way to cut a cheesecake?

Use the right knife, a sharp, thin-bladed knife. Don't use a serrated knife as filling and crumbs tend to stick to the serrations.

Cut with downward pressure, dragging the knife as little as possible. After each cut, wash and dry the knife so that you have a clean blade slicing through the cheesecake.

What's the easiest way to make crumbs for my crust?

Lots of folks use a food processor; we don't bother. We use a heavy-duty zipper-type plastic bag and crush the graham crackers or cookies with a rolling pin a few at a time. We save the plastic bag for the next crust.

Is there an easy way to form the crust?

Yes. Use a straight-sided glass with a smooth or nearly smooth base. By pressing the base of the glass into the crumbs, you can make a nice uniform bottom crust. By pressing the side of the glass against the wall of the pan with a slight rolling action, you can make a wonderful side crust.

My slices seem to stick to the base and it's hard to remove them. Is there an easy way to neatly remove my slices?

Yes. Take a wet dish towel and heat it in the microwave. Set the base with the cheesecake on the hot towel. The hot towel will soften the butter in the crust and allow the slices to slide off without sticking.

It helps to have a springform pan with a smooth base.

How to Make a Fruit-Filled and Fruit-Topped Cheesecake

A vanilla cheesecake paired with cherries, strawberries, or other fruit is the classic combination. But cheesecakes are so rich that we like plenty of fruit with our cheesecakes. Rather than pile the cheesecake high with fruit, consider putting part of the fruit in the filling. In the following recipe, we'll show you how.

Strawberry Vanilla Cheesecake

The following recipe uses fresh strawberries but frozen strawberries work well. We made this cheesecake with graham cracker crumbs; a nut crumb crust and a crust made from crushed vanilla wafers would pair well also. And of course, you can use raspberries, blueberries, peaches, mangoes, or other fruit for the topping.

You will need a nine- or ten-inch springform pan for this recipe. The cheesecake pictured was baked and served in a nine-inch glass-base springform pan.

For the crust

- 2 cups crushed graham crackers
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 5 tablespoons butter, melted

For the filling

- 3 8-ounce packages of cream cheese, softened
- 3 large eggs
- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1 tablespoon flour
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1/4 cup whipping cream
- For the topping
- 3 cups fresh or frozen strawberries
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1/4 cup sugar (omit if using sweetened, frozen berries)
- 1 tablespoons cornstarch
- 2-3 drops of red food coloring
- 1 cup of fresh or individually frozen berries, cleaned and hulled
- (use whole or if preferred, cut into smaller pieces)

Directions

1. Crush the graham crackers. Mix the crumbs with the cinnamon, sugar, and melted butter in a nine or ten-inch springform pan. Press the mixture into a crust across the bottom of the pan and up the sides. Put the crust in the refrigerator to set up while you prepare the filling and the topping.
2. Make the topping. Puree the strawberries in a blender with the lemon juice. You should have about 1 1/2 cups of puree. If you would like to remove the seeds, run the puree through a sieve. Place the puree in a small saucepan. Add the sugar, food coloring, and cornstarch. Cook over medium heat, stirring often, until thickened and bubbly. Set aside to cool.
3. Preheat the oven to 325 degrees.
4. Make the filling by mixing the cream

cheese with the paddle attachment of your stand-type mixer set at medium speed until smooth and creamy, about five minutes. Add the eggs, granulated sugar, flour, salt, vanilla, and whipping cream, and gently cream together until smooth. Do not over beat. Too much air in the filling will cause the cake to sink and crack.

5. Pour one half of the cream cheese filling into the crust. Spoon about 2/3's of the strawberry sauce onto the filling then spoon the remaining cream cheese mixture over the strawberry sauce. Refrigerate the remaining sauce.
6. Bake for 40 to 45 minutes or until the top just starts to turn golden and the center of the cake is just barely jiggly.
7. Let the cake cool in the pan on a wire rack for ten minutes. Run a knife around the edge of the pan to loosen. Remove the ring and let the cheesecake cool completely. Refrigerate for several hours.
8. To serve, stir the berries into the remaining sauce and spoon over the cheesecake.

Caramel Pear & Toasted Pecan Cheesecake

Ingredients

- 1 2/3 cup graham cracker crumbs
- 1/2 cup butter, melted
- 2 tablespoons granulated sugar
- 2 cup dried pears
- 1 cup water
- 2 eight-ounce packages of cream cheese
- 2 cups cottage cheese
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 large eggs
- 2 large egg yolks
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1/3 cup all-purpose flour
- 3/4 cup pecan pieces, toasted
- caramel ice cream topping

Directions

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees.

1. In a 9-inch springform pan, mix the graham cracker crumbs, melted butter, and sugar together. Press the mixture across the bottom of the pan and up the sides to form the crust. Put the crust in refrigerator while you mix the filling.
2. Add the pears and water to a small saucepan. Bring the pan to a simmer

over low heat. Cover and let stand for three or four minutes, until the water is absorbed. Set aside to cool. Once cooled, chop in a food processor until almost pureed.

3. While the pears are cooling, make the crust.
4. With the whip attachment and your stand-type mixer, slowly beat the sugars, salt, and cream cheese together until smooth. Add the cottage cheese and blend in. Add the eggs and yolks one at a time, slowly beating after each. Add the pears and vanilla and mix until nearly smooth.
5. Bake in a 9-inch springform pan for 45 minutes or until done. Let cool on a wire rack. Drizzle with caramel syrup and sprinkle with pecans.

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Pecan Praline Cheesecake



Ingredients

- 1 3/4 cups crushed graham crackers
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 4 tablespoons butter, melted
- 3 8-ounce packages of cream cheese, softened
- 3 large eggs
- 1 1/4 cups brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1/4 cup whipping cream
- 3/4 cup chopped pecans
- 2/3 cup brown sugar
- 1/3 cup butter
- 1 tablespoon light corn syrup
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla
- 15 to 20 pecan halves

Directions

1. Crush the graham crackers. Mix the crumbs with the sugar and melted butter in a ten-inch round springform pan or a nine-inch square springform pan. Press the mixture into a crust across the bottom of the pan and up the sides. Put the crust in the refrigerator to set up while you prepare the filling and the topping.
2. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Mix the cream cheese with the paddle attachment of your stand-type mixer set at medium speed until smooth and creamy, about five minutes. Add the eggs, 1 1/4-cups brown sugar, flour, salt, vanilla, and cream, and blend together until smooth. Do not over beat. Too much air in the filling will cause the cake to crack. Fold in the chopped pecans.
3. Pour the cream cheese filling into the crust. Bake for 50 to 55 minutes or until the top just starts to turn golden and the center of the cake is just barely jiggly. Cool on a wire rack. z
4. After the cheesecake has cooled, make the topping. Heat the 2/3-cup brown sugar and 1/3-cup butter together with the corn syrup over low heat until the mixture is bubbly. Continue cooking over low heat for 4 or 5 minutes or until the topping is smooth with no sugar crystals. Pour the hot topping over the cooled cheesecake. Garnish with pecan halves and a cherry. Serve chilled.

White Chocolate Cheesecake



Ingredients

- 1 2/3 cup graham cracker crumbs
- 1/2 cup butter, melted
- 2 tablespoons granulated sugar
- 4 8-ounce packages of cream cheese
- 1 1/3 cups granulated sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 4 large eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 1/3 cups white chocolate wafers or 8 ounces of white chocolate baking bars

Directions

Preheat the oven 325 degrees.

1. In a 9-inch springform pan, mix the graham cracker crumbs, melted butter, and sugar together. Press the mixture across the bottom of the pan and up the sides to form the crust. Put the crust in refrigerator while you mix the filling.
2. With the paddle attachment of your stand-type mixer, beat the cream cheese and sugar together. Add the salt, eggs and vanilla and beat until smooth. Melt the chocolate. Drizzle in the melted chocolate while the beaters are running. Pour into the crust.
3. Bake for 50 minutes or until the cake is done. Let cool on a wire rack. After ten minutes, loosen the sides with a spatula and remove the ring. Refrigerate the cheesecake to cool completely.

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German Chocolate Cheesecake

Everyone loves cheesecake and chocolate and cheesecake seems like the perfect combination.

This is an easy recipe to put together and the German chocolate and caramel makes for a scrumptious and very attractive cheesecake dessert. You can make the caramel topping from melted caramels but cara-

mel ice cream topping works just as well and saves a little time. This recipe can be made a day or two in advance of the dinner.

For the crust:

- 2 cups chocolate graham cracker crumbs (about two inner packages of graham crackers). Chocolate cookie crumbs may be substituted.
- 6 tablespoons butter, melted.

For the filling:

- 2 1/2 eight-ounce packages of cream cheese
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 3 large eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 tablespoons milk

For the toppings:

- 1 cup chopped pecans or walnuts

For the chocolate topping, combine four ounces of sweet German chocolate with two tablespoons whipping cream and one tablespoon butter. Melt in a small saucepan and stir until smooth.

For the caramel topping, melt 12 caramels with 1/3 cup cream in a small saucepan, stirring until smooth. Or use ice cream topping.

Directions

Preheat the oven to 450 degrees.

1. In a nine-inch spring form pan, mix the cracker crumbs and the melted butter. Press the crumb mixture into a crust across the bottom and about one

inch up the sides. Bake the crust for eight minutes.

2. In a large bowl, cream the cream cheese with the sugar. Add the flour and salt. Add the eggs, vanilla, and milk all at once. Mix until just combined, scraping down the sides of the bowl. Pour the filling mix into the crust.
3. Bake for ten minutes at 450 degrees. Lower the temperature to 200 degrees and bake for an additional 35 to 40 minutes or until the cheesecake filling is set.
4. After the cheesecake has cooled for ten minutes, with a sharp knife, loosen the edges of the cheesecake from the pan so that the cake will pull away from the pan as it cools. Remove the rim of the pan after it has cooled for about forty-five minutes.
5. Drizzle the cheesecake with caramel and then with chocolate. Sprinkle nuts on the cake. Refrigerate until completely cool before serving.



Pumpkin Cheesecake in a Gingersnap Crust



This scrumptious cheesecake is best made the night before so that it can thoroughly chill in the refrigerator. (Of course, that is one less thing you have to do on the day of the dinner.)

You will need a nine- or ten-inch springform pan for this recipe. (The nine-inch size is perfect.) The cake pictured was baked and served in a nine-inch glass-base springform pan.

For the crust

- 1 1/2 cups crushed gingersnaps
- 1/2 cup finely chopped nuts
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 4 tablespoons butter, melted

For the filling

- 3 8-ounce packages of cream cheese

- 3 large eggs
- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 1/3 cup pumpkin puree
- 1/4 cup whipping cream or yogurt
- 1/2 teaspoon allspice
- 1/2 tablespoon cinnamon

Directions

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

1. Crush the gingersnaps. Mix the crumbs with the nuts, brown sugar, and melted butter in a nine or ten-inch springform pan. Press the mixture into a crust across the bottom of the pan and up the sides. Put the crust in the refrigerator to set up while you prepare the filling.
2. Mix the cream cheese, eggs, granulated sugar, salt, and vanilla together with your stand-type mixer using the whisk attachment. Beat until smooth and fluffy, six to eight minutes. Set about 1 1/2 cups of the mixture aside for the topping.
3. To the remaining filling, add the pumpkin, whipping cream or yogurt, and spices. Beat until well-mixed. Pour the filling into the prepared crust. Carefully spoon the topping which was set-aside over the top of the pumpkin-cheesecake filling.
4. Bake for 70 to 80 minutes or until the top starts to brown and the center of the cake is just barely jiggly.
5. Let the cake cool in the pan on a wire rack for ten minutes. Run a knife around the edge of the pan to loosen. Remove the ring and let the cheesecake cool completely. Refrigerate for several hours before serving.

Chocolate Ribbon Cheesecake Recipe

A chocolate cheesecake is an impressive alternative to a vanilla cheesecake. This recipe calls for a walnut and graham cracker crust but you could use chocolate cookies if you prefer and leave out the nuts. Fresh berries are delightful with chocolate cheesecake but we chose to drizzle this cheesecake with chocolate syrup as we did with our Turtle Cheesecake.

You will need a nine or ten-inch springform pan for this recipe. The cheesecake pictured was baked and served in a nine-inch glass-base springform pan.

Ingredients

- 2 cups crushed graham crackers
- 1/2 cup finely chopped walnuts
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 5 tablespoons butter, melted
- For the filling
- 3 8-ounce packages of cream cheese, softened
- 3 large eggs
- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1 tablespoon flour
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1/4 cup whipping cream
- 4 ounces semi-sweet baking chocolate, melted
- Chocolate ice cream syrup

Directions

1. Make the crust: Crush the graham crackers. Mix the crumbs and chopped walnuts with the sugar and melted butter in a nine or ten-inch springform pan. Press the mixture into a crust across the bottom of the pan and up the sides. Put the crust in the refrigerator to set up while you prepare the filling.
2. Preheat the oven to 325 degrees.
3. Make the filling: Mix the cream cheese with the paddle attachment of your stand-type mixer set at medium speed until smooth and creamy, about five minutes. Add the eggs, granulated sugar, flour, salt, vanilla, and whipping cream and gently cream together until smooth. Do not over beat. Too much air in the filling will cause the cake to sink and crack.
4. With your mixer on the low setting, drizzle in the melted chocolate and mix until combined. (If your filling is too cold, some of the chocolate may set up leaving chocolate flecks in the filling. That's okay; the cheesecake will not be compromised and the flecks are actually quite attractive.)
5. Pour the cream cheese filling into the crust. Bake for 40 to 50 minutes or until the top starts to turn golden and the center of the cake is just barely jiggly. Because it is not as thick, a ten-inch cheesecake will bake more quickly than a nine.
6. Let the cake cool in the pan on a wire rack for ten minutes. Run a knife around the edge of the pan to loosen. Remove the ring and let the cheesecake cool completely. Refrigerate for several hours.
7. Prior to serving, drizzle the cheesecake with chocolate syrup.

Strawberry Cream Cheesecake



We often put strawberries on top of our cheesecakes. With this recipe, we blend the strawberries into the filling, put strawberries on the cheesecake, and then top it all with whipped cream—sort of like a decadent strawberry shortcake. Maybe because it reminds of us a strawberry shortcake, we think of this as a springtime dessert but it is great for any season.

For the crust

- 2 cups crushed graham crackers
- 4 tablespoons sugar
- 5 tablespoons butter, melted

For the filling

- 3 8-ounce packages of cream cheese, softened
- 4 large eggs
- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 3 tablespoons flour

- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoons vanilla
- 1 cup strawberry puree, strained to remove the seeds
- 2 drops red food coloring
- 1/2 teaspoon strawberry flavor
- whipping cream for topping
- fresh strawberries

Directions

1. Crush the graham crackers. Mix the crumbs with the sugar and melted butter in a nine or ten-inch springform pan. Press the mixture into a crust across the bottom of the pan and up the sides. Put the crust in the refrigerator to set up while you prepare the filling.
2. Preheat the oven to 325 degrees. Mix the cream cheese with the paddle attachment of your stand-type mixer set at medium speed until smooth and creamy, about five minutes. Add the eggs, granulated sugar, flour, salt, and vanilla, and gently cream together until smooth. Do not over beat. Too much air in the filling will cause the cake to sink and crack.
3. Fold the strawberry puree, coloring, and flavor into the filling. Spread the filling on the crust.
4. Bake for 40 to 50 minutes or until the top starts to turn golden and the center of the cake is just slightly jiggly. Because it is not as thick, a ten-inch cheesecake will bake more quickly than a nine.
5. Let the cheesecake cool in the pan on a wire rack for ten minutes. Run a knife around the edge of the pan to loosen. Remove the ring and let the cheesecake cool completely. Refrigerate for several hours.
6. Top with whipped cream and fresh strawberries to serve.

Orange Cream Cheesecake



When we were kids, we had these orange and vanilla ice cream treats on a stick. The combination was divine. Why not do the same with a cheesecake?

The following recipe uses orange juice concentrate for the orange and a smooth vanilla filling. It is easy to make.

For the crust

- 2 cups crushed graham crackers
- 4 tablespoons sugar
- 5 tablespoons butter, melted

For the filling

- 3 8-ounce packages of cream cheese, softened
- 3 large eggs
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 2 tablespoon flour
- 1/4 teaspoon salt

- 2 teaspoons vanilla
- 1/4 cup frozen orange juice concentrate
- orange extract or liqueur
- a drop or two of both yellow and red food coloring to make an orange color
- 2 tablespoons whipping cream
- whipped cream for garnish

Directions

1. Crush the graham crackers. Mix the crumbs with the sugar and melted butter in a nine or ten-inch springform pan. Press the mixture into a crust across the bottom of the pan and up the sides. Put the crust in the refrigerator to set up while you prepare the filling.
2. Preheat the oven to 325 degrees. Mix the cream cheese with the paddle attachment of your stand-type mixer set at medium speed until smooth and creamy, about five minutes. Add the eggs, granulated sugar, flour, salt, vanilla, and gently cream together until smooth. Do not over beat. Too much air in the filling will cause the cake to sink and crack.
3. Remove two cups of the filling and add the orange juice concentrate, extract, and coloring to the removed filling. Set aside.
4. Add the whipping cream to the remaining vanilla filling. Spread the vanilla filling in the on the crust. Carefully spoon the orange filling around the edge of the cheesecake letting the orange filling flow to the center. Smooth if necessary.
5. Bake for 40 to 50 minutes or until the top starts to turn golden and the center of the cake is just slightly jiggly. Because it is not as thick, a ten-inch cheesecake will bake more quickly than a nine.
6. Let the cheesecake cool in the pan on a wire rack for ten minutes. Run a knife around the edge of the pan to loosen. Remove the ring and let the cheesecake cool completely. Refrigerate for several hours.

What else can you do with a springform pan?

Most people think of their springform pan only when they make a cheesecake. You can do more than that: make coffeecakes, cornbread, and many cakes and desserts. Most batters, excepting very thin batters, will work with most pans. Even thinner batters will work in our new red silicone pan. The advantage is that you don't have to dig your goodie out of the pan and you have a very neat presentation.



Parmesan and Bacon Cornbread



It's fun to experiment with cornbread. Add your favorites to a cornbread recipe—and you can really be creative. Try sun-dried tomatoes, salami, green peppers, cheddar, or mushrooms. Think of your favorite pizza and add some of the same ingredients to cornbread.

In this savory version, we added crisply cooked bacon, onions, basil, and parmesan cheese. We loved it. Incidentally, this bread with the aromas of bacon, onions, parmesan, and basil smells absolutely wonderful while baking.

Ingredients

- 1/2 to 2/3 cups crisply-cooked bacon pieces
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup yellow cornmeal
- 3 tablespoons granulated sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon baking powder

- 1 teaspoon dry, crushed basil
- 4 tablespoons butter, melted
- 2 large eggs
- 1 1/4 cup milk
- 2/3 cup grated parmesan cheese
- 1/2 cup diced onion

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Prepare a nine-inch pan by greasing well. (We baked this bread in a nine-inch springform pan with a glass base.)
2. Mix the flour, cornmeal, sugar, salt, baking powder, and basil in a medium bowl.
3. Mix the bacon pieces, melted butter, eggs, milk, cheese, and onion together in another bowl. Make a well in the dry ingredients and add the wet ingredients to the dry. Stir together until mixed.
4. Spoon the batter into the prepared pan. Bake for 40 to 50 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the center of the bread comes out clean. If baked in a deeper pan or a light colored pan, it may take longer to bake. Cool on a wire rack for ten minutes and serve warm.

Easy Flourless Chocolate Cake



With only four ingredients and three steps, this is an easy flourless cake. And it's scrumptious—perfect to make for your sweetheart. As with other flourless chocolate cakes, this is dense and chocolaty.

A simple dusting of powdered sugar makes this cake elegant. Drizzle it with raspberry sauce, raspberry chocolate sauce, or chocolate sauce. (A recipe for raspberry sauce follows.) Finally add a scoop of vanilla ice cream or a dollop of whipped cream.

Be sure and use good quality, dark cocoa. We use Ramstadt-Breda Dark Cocoa which has three times the cocoa butter of most national brands. This will not be the same with ordinary cocoa.

Ingredients

- 8 large eggs
- 1 cup rich, dark cocoa, [Ramstadt-Breda](#)

or equal

- 1/2 cup butter, melted and cooled slightly
- 1 1/4 cups granulated sugar

Directions

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees.

1. In your stand-type mixer and with the whip attachment beat the eggs for three minutes at medium speed, until they are bubbly and lighter colored. While the eggs are beating, melt the butter and measure the other ingredients. Measure the cocoa by spooning cocoa into a cup—do not compress the cocoa.
2. Add the sugar and cocoa and beat in. While the mixer is running, drizzle in the melted butter. Continue beating until mixed. Scrape the batter into the pan.
3. Bake for 30 to 40 minutes or an insta-read thermometer registers 165 to 170 degrees when inserted into the center of the cake. Cool on a wire rack and then place in the refrigerator to chill. The cake will become dense as it cools. Dust with powdered sugar if you desire.

Yield: 12 servings.

How to Make Raspberry Sauce



Raspberries alone are not tart and not flavored enough for a dessert sauce even when thickened with a starch. There are two possible solutions: Cooking the fruit down to concentrate the flavors or adding a jelly for thickness and flavor. This recipe uses the latter.

Ingredients

- 12 ounces, about 3 cups frozen, unsweetened raspberries
- 2/3 cup [red currant jelly](#)
- about 1/4 cup sugar

Directions

1. Thaw and puree the raspberries. Strain them twice through a sieve/strainer or until nearly all of the seeds are removed. Place the puree in a small saucepan. Add the jelly.

2. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the jelly is completely melted and blended with the fruit. Sweeten to taste with the sugar while it is still hot. Stir to make sure that the sugar is dissolved. Let cool.

Yield: About 1 1/3 cups of raspberry sauce.

What You'll Need

- For the cake, you will need a good quality [nine-inch springform pan](#). We recommend our glass-based springform pans. We have baked this cake many times and have not had a single leak. We cut the cake right on the glass base.
- A good [quality cocoa](#) is essential. You want at least 16% cocoa butter. Most store cocoas are 8 to 10%. Ramstadt-Breda cocoa is 24%.
- An [insta-read thermometer](#). The proteins in the eggs will coagulate at 165 degrees and create the structure for the cake.
- For the raspberry sauce, you will need a [medium sieve/strainer](#), one about 6 inches in diameter. The mesh in this size of sieve is usually the right size to catch most of the raspberry seeds and still let the puree pass.
- The red currant jelly gives the puree body, tartness, and color.

Coffeecake with Fruit Filling

This coffeecake will get them smiling. Everyone loves a warm, tender coffeecake. This one is filled with fruit and made easy because you can use a canned fruit filling. In fact, choose your favorite pie filling—cherry, apple, apricot, peach or more. With the filling tucked inside the coffeecake, this reminded us of a streuselkuchen. It is very good.

Ingredients

- 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 3/4 cup brown sugar
- 3/4 cup butter
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon [cinnamon](#)
- 1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 3/4 cup buttermilk
- 1 large egg, whisked
- 1 teaspoon vanilla or 1/2 teaspoon almond extract
- 1 21 oz can fruit pie filling
- 1/2 cup confectioners' sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla or 1/4 teaspoon almond extract
- 1-2 tablespoons milk

Directions

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Prepare a ten- to twelve-inch baking or tart pan by greasing well and flouring the inside of the pan. (A springform pan works wonderfully

well and if you are using a springform pan, you will not need to flour it.) For the coffeecake in this picture, we used a ten-inch glass-based springform pan.

1. Mix the flour and brown sugar together. With a pastry knife, cut in the butter until the mixture is granular in appearance. Measure and set aside 3/4 cup of the crumb mixture.
2. Stir the baking soda, baking powder, spices and salt into the remaining crumb mixture. Form a well in the center of this dry mixture. Add the buttermilk to the egg and add the extract. Pour the buttermilk mixture into the well in the dry mixture. Stir with a fork until combined. Do not over mix. Some lumps will remain. Set aside about one cup of this batter.
3. Place the batter (not the cup set aside) in the prepared pan. Spread it evenly across the bottom and slightly up the sides with a rubber spatula. Spread the pie filling over the center of the batter. (We find the full 21 ounce can to be a little too much; we use nearly all of the filling.) Spoon the set aside batter on the pie filling in drops—it will not cover the filling but will spread while baking. Sprinkle the remaining 3/4 cup crumb mixture over the batter. (You will have four layers: batter on the bottom, then fruit filling, then batter, and finally the crumb topping.)
4. Bake for 45 to 50 minutes or until golden and the cake portion tests done with a toothpick. Baking times will vary with different pans. Let the cake cool for ten minutes in the pan on the rack. If you are using a springform pan, loosen the edges and remove the ring after ten minutes.
5. Mix the confectioners' sugar, extract and enough milk to form an icing of drizzling consistency. Drizzle over the coffeecake.

New England Apple Pie Pastry

This is made with a rich cream cheese pastry on top and bottom with an apple [cinnamon](#) filling tucked in. It's a little more work than an apple pie but it's not hard and it is worth the extra time.

The topping is made by freezing the pastry dough and then shredding it as you would shred cheese. We used an electric shredder attachment for our stand-type mixer and made quick work of the task though a box grater works too.

You can use a nine or ten-inch springform pan for this.

Ingredients for the dough

- 1 8-ounce package of cream cheese
 - 1 cup cold butter
 - 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
 - 1 1/4 cups granulated sugar
 - 3 1/4 cups all purpose flour
 - 1/2 teaspoon salt
 - 1/2 tablespoon baking powder
 - 1/3 cup whipping cream
- Ingredients for the filling
- 5-6 medium baking apples
 - 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
 - 3/4 cup granulated sugar
 - 1 tablespoon lemon juice
 - 3 tablespoons flour
 - 2/3 cup dried cranberries (optional)
 - 1/2 cup chopped walnuts
 - 1/2 to 2/3 of an 8-ounce jar of red currant jelly or other red jam or jelly

Directions

1. Cream the cream cheese and butter together. Add the vanilla and granulated sugar and continue creaming.
2. In another bowl, mix the flour, salt, and baking powder together. Add half the flour mixture to the creamed mixture and beat until just combined. Add the whipping cream and beat again. Add the rest of the flour mixture and beat until just combined. You should have a soft dough. Add more cream or flour if necessary to get the right consistency.
3. Divide the dough in half. Put one half in the refrigerator and the other in freezer. Allow the dough in the refrigerator to freeze rock hard, at least several hours.
4. For the filling, peel and core the apples then coarsely grate them. Add the cinnamon, sugar, lemon juice, flour, optional cranberries, and nuts. Stir to combine. Refrigerate until ready to bake.
5. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Take the half of the dough that was in the refrigerator and roll it out as you would pie dough. Place it in a ten-inch springform pan and mold the dough across the bottom and 2/3's up the sides. (See picture.) You may cut and patch the dough as required.
6. Spread the jelly across the bottom of the dough. Spoon the filling into the pastry shell. (See picture.)
7. Take the frozen dough from the freezer. Coarsely grate it as you would cheese using a box grater or electric grater. Spread the grated dough across the top of the pastry.
8. Bake for 45 minutes or until the top is lightly browned and the apples are oozing juice. Cool on a wire rack for five minutes and then remove the outer ring. Cool until just warm and serve plain, with whipped cream, or ice cream.