

New York Style Cheesecake

Compliments of Chef Richard's Kitchen

12 Servings

Cheesecake, to me at least, has always been a hit or miss endeavour. The traditional method of baking a cheesecake was to start it baking in a very hot oven (500° F), then after a few minutes turn the heat down to 200° and let it cook. For me at least, most of the time it was over-cooked. I actually resorted to buying cheesecake for guests. (Yes. I told them it was store bought.)

Then, I ran across an article by Andrea Geary from Cook's Illustrated suggesting that instead of relying on the oven's heat loss consistency, why not reverse the process and start off low and finish high. Seemed to make sense. So after trying it her way, I'll never have to buy a cheesecake again. The result is delicious and predictable.



CRUST:

6 whole graham crackers
1/3 C dark brown sugar
1/2 C flour
1/4 tsp salt
7 Tbsp unsalted butter (melted)

FILLING:

5 8oz packages cream cheese
1 1/2 C sugar
1/8 tsp salt
1/3 C sour cream
2 tsp lemon juice
2 tsp vanilla extract
6 large eggs + 2 egg yolks

TOPPING:

10 oz frozen blueberries
1/2 C sugar
2 tsp lemon juice
2 Tbsp water
2 tsp corn starch

Bring all 5 packages of cream cheese to room temperature. They must be softened before mixing.

Preheat oven to 325° F. Place graham crackers, brown sugar and flour in food processor and pulse until well blended. Add salt and melted butter in thirds. Pulse until well blended. Brush melted butter on bottom and up the side of springform pan. Press crust using a glass with a smooth side and bottom, or ramekin against bottom and about halfway up sides. Keep crust at a consistent thickness. Bake 12 – 13 minutes until crust is fragrant. Remove from oven and allow to cool completely.

Turn oven temperature down to 200°.

Switch the food processor for a stand mixer fitted with a paddle. Beat the cream cheese, half the sugar (3/4 C) and salt, and mix until well combined. Add remaining 3/4 C sugar and blend an additional minute. Scrape down edges with rubber spatula. Add sour cream, lemon juice and vanilla extract and beat at low speed about 1 minute. Add egg yolks and mix until blended. Add remaining eggs one at a time and beat until thoroughly blended.

Next is a critical step if you want a smooth cheesecake. Pour mixture through strainer into bowl. You will have to press the mixture with the spatula to help the mix through the screen.

Brush side of springform pan with melted butter and pour mixture into pan. Use the spatula to even out the mix. Allow the mixture to set about 10 – 15 minutes to allow any air pockets to come to the surface. Break them with a toothpick. Bake at 200° for about 30 – 45 minutes. Remove from oven and break any air bubbles that have risen to the top. Place back in oven and bake for 2 1/4 - 2 1/2 hours until a thermometer stuck in the center registers 165°. The temperature is critical, not the time. Remove cheesecake from oven and set the oven temperature for 500°. When oven is at temperature, return cheesecake and bake until top has browned slightly, about 4 – 6 minutes. Remove from oven and let cool for about 5 minutes. Run a paring knife around the outside of the crust. Allow to cool for 2 1/2 - 3 hours. Place tightly in plastic wrap and cool in refrigerator for about 6 hours.

While cheesecake is cooling place 10 oz of frozen blueberries in a medium saucepan. Add 1/2 C sugar and lemon juice. Heat until boiling. Use potato masher to break up blueberries. Make a slurry of the water and corn starch. Add to mixture and stir until topping has thickened. Remove from heat and allow to cool. Refrigerate until ready to use.

Remove cheesecake from refrigerator 30 minutes before serving to allow it to warm up. Remove sides of springform pan. Run long knife between bottom of crust and pan to remove cake to plate. Use HOT water to warm knife blade prior to each cut of the cheesecake. Serve with blueberry topping.