

CLASSIC NEW YORK CHEESECAKE

Okay, this recipe is for a REAL cheesecake that purists like and not some Jell-o Pudding pseudo-cheesecake in a store-bought graham cracker pie crust that Aunt Ethyl brought to the family picnic. Puh-lease!!!! 😊

Yes, I know this recipe looks long and complicated, but cheesecakes are very time-consuming and can be temperamental and I wanted to be sure that I covered all the bases clearly, thoroughly and accurately so that you will have a pleasant and successful baking experience.

Plan at least 1 – 2 days ahead to make this as it takes a lot of time.

You will need:

- Food processor
- 10" springform pan that is **no less** than 2 ½" deep. If you plan on baking a lot of cheesecakes, spend the extra money and get a high-quality, non-stick pan like a Kaiser Backform.
- Large, aluminum or equivalent size turkey roasting pan for the water bath (aka bain marie). Most supermarket large aluminum turkey roasting pans are sufficient.
- Heavy Duty Aluminum Foil
- Non-Stick Aluminum Foil
- Can use a hand mixer, but a standing mixer with a flat beater works best for this recipe. (Mix on low-to-medium speeds)

INGREDIENTS:

For the Crust:

- 16 Keebler Pecan Sandy cookies or graham crackers or ginger snaps pr equivalent cookies to make about 1 – 1½ cup of crumbs. Note: If you like graham cracker crusts and you have a Trader Joe's store near you, get their cinnamon graham crackers – they are far superior to anything from Keebler or Nabisco and also make GREAT s'mores!!!
- 2 Tablespoons REAL butter, NOT margarine, melted

For the Filling:

It is very important that the refrigerated ingredients be at room temperature before combining – be sure to take them out of the refrigerator about 1 hour ahead. This will ensure that your mixture is smooth and without lumps and it will also reduce the chances of the top cracking (when combined with the water bath baking method).

- 5 large eggs, room temperature
- 2 cups (one pint) sour cream, room temperature
- 4 8-ounce packages cream cheese, room temperature
- 8 tablespoons (one stick) REAL butter, NOT margarine, room temperature

- 1 1/2 cups sugar (very fine Baker's Sugar works best, but regular table sugar is okay)
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- OPTIONAL: 1 teaspoon grated lemon zest

DIRECTIONS:

Okay, before you start, be sure that the rack is installed in the oven correctly, meaning that the rack is inserted in the oven so that the rack hooks (on the back of the rack) are properly positioned so that when you pull the rack out half way and place something on it, the rack catches on the oven wall edges/ledges and won't tilt/fall down potentially creating a huge mess and possibly spilling hot food or liquids on someone – believe me, having the rack improperly installed is a common mistake and very dangerous!

1. Position the baking rack in the center of the oven and preheat the oven to 300 degrees.
2. Wrap a double layer of heavy-duty aluminum foil tightly around the outside bottom and sides, of the springform pan crimping and pleating the foil to make it conform to the pan – it doesn't have to look neat or perfect, just make sure it covers at least from the bottom to **slightly above the top** of the pan. This will help to prevent water seeping into the pan when you put it into the water bath. I emphasize keeping the foil slightly above the top of the pan because the water in the water bath will expand during baking and if you have filled it slightly over halfway up the sides of the springform pan, the water may seep over the top edge of the foil/pan if it isn't high enough. If it does seep in, I have a fix for it below.

For the Crust:

1. Grind cookies up into fine crumbs a food processor and place in a medium-sized bowl.
2. Pour melted butter over crumbs and mix with fork until combined.
3. Generously butter the bottom of the springform pan or use Pam. (See TIPS section below.)
4. Press the crumbs evenly along the bottom – you just want a thin layer about ¼" thick or less. Avoid the urge to make a thick crust that a lot of people prefer, including myself, as this recipe barely fits into the pan as it is.
5. Bake for 8-10 minutes until slightly brown.
6. Remove from the oven and set aside to cool.

During this process, scrape down the sides with a spatula and continue blending, as needed. If using a stand mixer, also clean off the flat beater or whisk as needed.

1. In a large mixing bowl, using an electric mixer, beat the eggs with the sour cream until well blended.
2. In a medium-sized bowl, beat the cream cheese with the butter until smooth and creamy.
3. Add the cream cheese & butter mixture to the egg & sour cream mixture and beat until smooth.
4. Add the sugar, cornstarch, vanilla, lemon juice and lemon zest and beat thoroughly, about 2 minutes.
5. Take a small slice of butter and butter the inside edges of the pan taking care not to dislodge the crust.
6. Slowly and carefully pour mixture into the aluminum foil wrapped, springform pan with crust, taking care not to dislodge the crust.

Baking:

1. Prepare a large cup(s), tea kettle, pitcher, etc., with very hot tap water and set aside.
2. Gently place the foil-wrapped springform pan with crust and cream cheese mixture into the turkey roasting pan.
3. Pull the rack out slightly and place the turkey roasting pan with cheesecake onto the rack. Take your hot tap water and fill the roasting pan with water until it reaches about halfway up the sides of the springform pan.
4. Gently push the rack all the way back into the oven and close the oven door.
5. Bake for 2 hours 15 minutes. At about 1 hour 45 minutes, check it to see if the top is browning too much. If so, take a piece of non-stick aluminum foil and “tent” it over the pan to prevent burning. You should **not** need to add additional time to baking because of this.
6. At the end of the baking time, the top should be golden brown–to-brown and a knife or bamboo skewer inserted in the center should come out mostly clean. If it is still a little wet or damp, that is okay.
7. When baking is done, turn the oven off and leave the oven door open for a few minutes to allow the heat to escape.
8. With oven-safe handwear, carefully remove tented non-stick aluminum foil so as not to dislodge the top crust or drip water onto the top of the crust. “Non-stick” foil sometimes isn’t as quite “non-stick” as it should be.

9. Carefully lift the cheesecake out of the water bath being careful not to drip boiling water on yourself.
10. Carefully peel the aluminum foil from around the pan and place the cheesecake somewhere to cool at room temperature for about 4 hours. During this process if you find that water has leaked into the pan, do not despair, all is not lost!! I have a fix – see **TIPS** below.
11. Refrigerate **uncovered** until well chilled. For the best flavor and texture, it is best to let the cheesecake chill overnight. If you have to cover it, do so with a double paper towel and secure it with a large rubber band. If you try to cover it with anything else, condensation will probably form on the cover and drip down onto the top of the cheesecake. That won't hurt it or change the flavor/texture, it just ruins the aesthetics. After thoroughly chilling in the refrigerator, leftover pieces can be placed in air-tight containers and frozen.

TIPS:

To make sure my cakes and cheesecakes release easily here's what I do: I buy those thin, non-stick oven liner sheets like the ones from Cooks Innovations (Amazon.com or Bed, Bath & Beyond) and I cut them to the size of the pans' bottoms and place them in the bottom before pouring in the batter – sticking problem solved!

For water inside the foil-wrapped springform pan:

1. Remove the cheesecake completely from the foil wrapping.
2. **VERY CAREFULLY AND VERY SLOWLY** tilt the pan left, right, forwards and backwards to drain off whatever amount of water you can. Again, you have to do this very carefully and only **tilting the pan only slightly** in the various directions so you don't lose the contents or cause a crack to occur. Your goal is not to get all of the water out, just a fair portion of it.
3. Place the cheesecake back in the oven directly on the rack (not back in the water bath), tent the foil back over the top, and allow it bake for about 10 more minutes, but no more – you don't want to dry out the cheesecake.
4. This procedure should mostly evaporate the remaining water in the pan. The crust will still be somewhat moist, but most people will never be the wiser and compliment you on your delicious cheesecake. Remember, with this cheesecake, crust is pretty much an afterthought, and not a primary player.

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