

New York Cheesecake

No cheesecake is as famous as the smooth, cream cheese–based New York cheesecake. This style of cheesecake is also made in Europe, Asia, and South America, with native flavorings and crusts. In fact, you can make your own variation by substituting your favorite flavorings for the ones called for here.

Crust

- 1½ cups graham cracker crumbs
- 3 tablespoons granulated sugar
- 5 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 1 teaspoon honey

Filling

- 5 (8-ounce) bars cream cheese, softened
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1½ cups granulated sugar
- 1 tablespoon confectioners' sugar
- ½ teaspoon cornstarch
- 2 egg yolks, at room temperature
- 1½ teaspoons vanilla extract
- 5 eggs, at room temperature
- Zest of ½ lemon, grated

Toppings

- 2 cups whipped cream (page 323)
- 1 whole strawberry

Makes 1 cake (serves 6 to 8)

TO PREPARE

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Butter and flour a 10-inch round springform pan, and line its outer seam with aluminum foil to prevent leaks. Prepare a water bath: Set the springform pan in another pan that is at least 2 inches larger all around. Pour water into the larger pan until it is half full. Then remove the springform pan and set the larger pan in the oven to preheat.

TO MAKE THE CRUST

Combine the graham cracker crumbs and sugar in a medium bowl. Stir in the butter and honey to moisten the mixture. Press the mixture into the bottom of the prepared pan; set aside.

TO MAKE THE CAKE

Combine the cream cheese, flour, granulated sugar, confectioners' sugar, and cornstarch in a large bowl and beat with a mixer until blended. Beat in the egg yolks and vanilla. Add the whole eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. When the mixture is blended, stir in the lemon zest. Pour the batter on top of the crust.

TO BAKE

Place the cake pan in the preheated water bath. Bake for 10 minutes, then lower the oven temperature to 200°F and bake for 40 to 50 minutes longer, or until the top is lightly browned. You will know the cake is ready when it feels bouncy to the touch, or a knife inserted in the center comes out clean.

TO SERVE

Remove from the pan. Spread a thin layer of whipped cream over the top of the cheesecake. Pipe more whipped cream around the edge and place a strawberry in the center. Serve at room temperature. If you need to store the cake or leftovers, cover and refrigerate, and bring back to room temperature before serving.

VARIATIONS

Canadian Blueberry Cheesecake

Pour 1½ cups chopped blueberries into the batter before baking. After the cake is baked, top with 1½ cups blueberry sauce (page 320).

Caribbean Coconut-Rum Cheesecake

Add ½ cup shredded sweetened coconut to the crust. Replace the vanilla with 3 tablespoons dark rum.

Florida Keys Lime Cheesecake

Replace the lemon zest with lime zest. Replace the vanilla with 1 tablespoon lime juice.

Ginger Cheesecake

Replace the graham crackers with ginger-snaps. Add ½ teaspoon fresh ginger to the batter.

Swiss Chocolate Cheesecake

Replace the graham crackers with chocolate cookies. Add ¼ cup unsweetened cocoa powder and 1½ cups chopped Swiss chocolate to the batter.

Ugandan Peanut Butter Cheesecake

Replace the graham crackers with peanut butter cookies. Before pouring in the batter, spread ¼ cup peanut butter on the crust and swirl ¼ cup peanut butter into the batter.