STRAWBERRY CHEESECAKE

INGREDIENTS
For the crust
3/4 cup graham cracker crumbs
2 tablespoons sugar
3 tablespoons butter, melted

For the filling
8 ounces cream cheese, softened
5 tablespoons sugar
1 egg
3 tablespoons milk
1 teaspoon vanilla
Pinch of salt

For the glaze
1 cup fresh strawberries, washed, hulled and cut into small pieces
1/2 cup sugar
1 teaspoon cornstarch mixed into 1 tablespoon cold water

To garnish
1/2 cup fresh strawberries, washed, hulled and cut half
Mint leaves (optional)

DIRECTIONS
Preheat the oven to 400F. Prepare a 9 inch spring form pan with cooking spray.

First, make the crust. Stir together crumbs, sugar and butter until moistened. Press evenly into bottom only of the spring form pan. Bake for 15 minutes and let cool completely.

Next, make the filing. In a large mixer bowl beat cream cheese and sugar on medium speed of electric mixer until fluffy. Beat in eggs, milk, vanilla and salt just until blended. Pour over crust in pan; spread evenly.

Bake for 15 minutes at 400F, then reduce heat to 350F and bake 20 to 25 minutes more, until cake is firm at sides and soft-set (jiggles just a little) in the center. Do not over-bake. Cool cake in pan on a wire rack for up to 2 hours, then cover and refrigerate for 2 to 4 hours (or even overnight).

Next, make the strawberry topping. In a saucepan, combine strawberries and sugar and bring to a boil. Cook until strawberries are soft. Using a stick blender or a regular blender, make a strawberry sauce by pureeing the strawberries completely. Return to the sauce pan, over main heat, add cornstarch slurry and bring back to a full boil to thicken. Let cool to room temperature before pouring over cheesecake. Sprinkle remaining 1/2 cup of fresh strawberries over the top and garnish with mint leaves if desired.