

PUMPKIN CARAMEL CHEESECAKE WITH TOASTED PECANS

INGREDIENTS

for the Crust

1 1/2 cups ground Ginger Snaps (about 20 cookies)
2 tablespoons pecans
4 tablespoons sugar
6 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted

for the Filling

1 and 1/3 cups granulated sugar
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
1/2 teaspoon salt
15 ounces pumpkin puree (fresh or canned)
24 ounces cream cheese (3 packages), room temperature
1 Tablespoon vanilla extract
2 teaspoons freshly squeezed lemon juice
5 large eggs at room temperature
1/2 cup heavy cream or half and half
1/2 cup sour cream

for the Topping

3/4 cup store-bought caramel sauce (ice cream topping)
4 tablespoons toasted chopped pecans

DIRECTIONS

For the Crust: Adjust oven rack to lower-middle position and heat oven to 350F. Spray bottom and sides of 9-inch spring form pan evenly with nonstick cooking spray, then wrap the pan with several layers of aluminum foil to prevent water from seeping into the pan – cover the pan at least 2/3 of the way up the sides of the pan.

Combine the gingersnap and pecans in a food processor and pulse until fine. Pour into a medium work bowl and add the sugar and the melted butter, and mix with a fork until evenly moistened. Turn crumbs into prepared spring form pan and gently shake the pan to evenly distribute the crumbs. Using drinking glass, press crumbs evenly into the bottom of the pan. Bake until fragrant and browned about the edges, about 15 minutes. Cool on wire rack while making filling.

Reduce heat to 325F.

For the filling: Bring about 4 quarts water to simmer in a tea pot or stockpot; set aside. Whisk sugar, spices, and salt together in small bowl and set aside.

Then, dry the pumpkin puree: line baking sheet with triple layer of paper towels. Spread pumpkin on paper towels in roughly even layer. Cover pumpkin with second triple layer of paper towels and press firmly until paper towels are saturated. Discard the paper towels, and place the now drier pumpkin puree into a small bowl.

In stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat the cream cheese at medium speed to break up and soften slightly, about 1 minute. Scrape beater and bottom and sides of bowl with rubber spatula. Add about one third of sugar mixture and beat at medium-low speed until combined, about 1 minute; scrape bowl and add remaining sugar in two additions, scraping bowl after each addition. Add pumpkin, vanilla, and lemon juice and beat at medium speed until combined, about 45 seconds; scrape bowl. Add 3 eggs and beat at medium-low until incorporated, about 1 minute; scrape bowl. Add remaining 2 eggs and beat

at medium-low until incorporated, about 45 seconds; scrape bowl. Add heavy cream and sour cream and beat at low speed until combined, about 45 seconds. Using rubber spatula, scrape bottom and sides of bowl and give final stir by hand.

Pour the filling into the cooled crust. Place your spring form pan into a roasting pan. Pull your oven rack halfway out and place the roasting pan on to the oven rack. (Your spring form pan should be wrapped with aluminum foil at this point.) Slowly add the boiling water to the pan, until your spring form pan is covered 1/2 to 2/3 with hot water. Slowly push your oven rack back into the oven.

Bake until center of cake is slightly wobbly when pan is shaken, and center of cake registers 145 to 150 degrees on instant-read thermometer, about 1 1/2 hours. Set roasting pan on wire rack and very, very slowly and gently run a thin spatula or knife around the outside of the cheesecake to loosen the cake from the sides of the pan. Cool until water is just warm, about 45 minutes. Remove spring form pan from water bath, discard foil, and set on wire rack; continue to cool until barely warm, about 3 hours. Wrap with plastic wrap and refrigerate until chilled, at least 4 hours or up to 3 days.

Slide thin metal spatula between crust and pan bottom to loosen, then slide cake onto serving platter. Pour caramel sauce over the cheesecake and sprinkle with the toasted pecans. Let cheesecake stand at room temperature about 30 minutes, then cut into wedges and serve.