

Pumpkin Cheesecake with Bourbon Caramel Sauce

Pecan Crust:

- 1 1/2 cups pecan pieces toasted
- 3 tablespoons each of light brown sugar and unsalted butter
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Note: Though I think that the pecan crust has a superior flavor, you can substitute a graham cracker crust if you prefer. In a food processor grind 1 1/3 cups graham crackers into a fine powder. Put them in a medium sized bowl with 1/3 cup granulated sugar, 5 tablespoons melted unsalted butter and 1/2 teaspoon of cinnamon. Press into the bottom and slightly up the sides of your prepared 9" springform pan. Bake at 350° for about 10 minutes until golden.

Filling:

- 3-8oz. packages of cream cheese at room temperature
- 4 eggs room temperature
- 1 1/2 cups granulated sugar
- zest from one lemon
- 1-15oz. pumpkin puree
- 1/2 cup plain yogurt (low fat is fine)
- 1/4 teaspoon each of ground nutmeg, ground cloves, and sea salt
- 1 teaspoon each of ground ginger and cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Bourbon Caramel Sauce:

- 6 tablespoons butter melted

- 1 1/2 cups pecan pieces toasted
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 1 cup dark brown sugar
- 1/4 cup each of light corn syrup and bourbon
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

Preheat oven to 350°

To make the crust:

Butter the bottom of a 9" springform pan and line with parchment paper. Place the pecans on a cookie sheet in a single layer. Bake for 5-6 minutes until they are slightly fragrant. Toss in a food processor with the sugar, melted butter, and cinnamon. Pulse until the nuts are ground with some small pieces and they start to clump with the other ingredients. Tip in to your prepared springform pan; press down evenly and slightly up the sides. Bake for 12-15 minutes. Cool completely. If you are making the graham cracker crust, see **note** above.

For the Filling:

It is very important to make sure the cream cheese is at room temperature because you want the filling to have a smooth, creamy texture. Into the bowl of an electric mixer add the sugar and the cream cheese. Blend until smooth and then add the eggs one at a time. Now add the lemon zest, yogurt, pumpkin, spices, salt and vanilla. Fold in with a spatula. Put a couple layers of aluminum foil under the bottom of the springform pan, make sure you wrap the foil above the water level on the sides so that it is watertight. Pour the filling on top of the cooled crust and place it in a roasting pan. Place the two pans in the preheated oven and then fill the roasting pan with boiling water so that it reaches about halfway up the side of the springform pan. Be careful when you push the rack back into the oven so that none of the water splashes out of the pan. Bake for about 1 hour and 15 minutes. The center should still be a bit jiggly. Take the roasting pan out of the oven but leave the cake in the water for 1/2 hour longer. Put the cake on a cooling rack and run a sharp knife around the pan to loosen the edges of the cake. Cool completely and refrigerate until ready to eat.