

Citrusy Cheesecake

Serves 8–10

Cheesecake as a concept is well known. It's basic, it's perfect and it's a classic for a reason. Slightly more citrusy than your average, almost creamsicle-esque (creamsicle: my favorite thing to eat and think about eating), it's also more shallow than your typical. This is for a more fair crust:filling ratio and to eschew the whole water bath thing. To prevent it from cracking (a superficial thing that bothers some), cool the cheesecake at room temperature before refrigerating (the drastic fluctuation in temperature is what causes the cracking! The more you know). Alternatively, if it cracks, simply cover the top with a festive parade of your favorite sliced citrus.

For the crust:

8 ounces/225g vanilla wafers or graham crackers (shy of 2 packages)

3 tablespoons/40g light brown sugar

6 tablespoons/85g unsalted butter, melted

Pinch of kosher salt

For the filling:

1 pound/450g/two 8-ounce packages cream cheese, room temperature

1 cup/240ml/8 oz sour cream, full fat greek yogurt or labne

½ cup/100g granulated sugar

2 large eggs

2 tablespoons/12g finely grated citrus zest (lemon, lime, tangerine, etc)

Pinch of kosher salt

Thinly sliced citrus, for serving, optional

For the crust:

1. Preheat the oven to 325°. Pulse the cookies in a food processor until you've got a good, coarse crumb (not too sandy or powdery). You can also do this by hand by placing the cookies in a resealable bag and crushing or smashing them with a rolling pin or heavy pot.

2. Transfer crumbs to a medium bowl and add brown sugar, butter and a pinch of salt. Using your hands, mix everything together until you've got a nice wet-sand texture with no obvious dry bits.

3. Press the crust into the bottom and up the sides of a 9-inch pie plate, tart pan or springform pan (alternatively, you can use a 9-inch cake pan lined with parchment up the sides for easy removal). Using the bottom of a measuring cup or small bowl, make sure the crust is really pressed in there, otherwise the cheesecake will be challenging to slice later once cooled.

4. Bake the crust until it's lightly golden brown at the edges (it gets baked again, so don't overdo it here), 10 to 12 minutes.

For the filling:

5. Combine cream cheese, sour cream and granulated sugar in the bowl of a food processor. Blend until the mixture, scraping down the sides to get all bits of cream cheese, until it's extremely smooth, almost pudding-like in its texture. Add eggs, citrus zest and a pinch of salt and continue to blend until there are no lumps (this is your last chance to remove lumps!) and the mixture is smooth and nearly liquified.

6. Pour the filling into the prepared crust (you may have some leftover filling depending on your chosen vessel) and bake until the filling is mostly set with just a small, slight jiggle in the center (and absolutely no browning!), 20 to 30 minutes if using a pie plate, and closer to 25 to 35 if using a springform. Turn the oven off and leave the door open a crack—let the tart sit inside the oven as it gradually cools for about 20 minutes. Remove the tart to cool at room temperature for about 30 minutes before transferring it to the fridge to cool completely (about two hours). This annoying sequence is optional, but it is good at preventing those deep cracks that form from sudden temperature change.

7. Scatter fresh citrus slices on top as you like before slicing and serving.

EAT WITH: so much fresh citrus.

DO AHEAD: cheesecake can be made 5 days ahead of time, wrapped tightly in plastic wrap and refrigerated.