

Creamy Baked Cheesecake Recipe from Blacksmiths Cottage

Like most of the best recipes, this has evolved somewhat over the now almost 20 years (gulp!) that I have been cooking it, but I shall give both the original version, and the most recent incarnation. I am rather naughtily still not at all metric, mainly because I have a very nice, very traditional set of balance scales with lbs and oz weights, but I'm sure you can adapt if need be!

Also like most of the best recipes, this has a story with it too. We lived in the States for a couple of years in the early nineties, and we had a good friend – Massimo Cardinalli, a lovely Italian, but also a fearful food snob. Dangerous to invite round for dinner, he would always tell you EXACTLY what he thought of the food (too much salt, not enough

Delighted was I to be told (and in company) that it was the best cheesecake he had ever tasted – from Massimo this was praise indeed, but secretly, I was quite pleased to be able to inform him, that it was only the second I had ever made, and the recipe came from the inside of the cardboard wrapping of a Philadelphia packet I had bought from Safeway a couple of weeks before!

I'm sure that before it was shared with the world via a soft cheese wrapper, it was someone's tried and tested favourite, maybe passed on from generation to generation, (or at least since condensed milk has been around!) It has certainly been tried and tested by our family very many times, and shared at many special gatherings, including our workshop lunches. So to all of you that have enjoyed it here, and asked for the recipe – here it is!

If any of you end up making any interesting and deliciously successful variations, please do let us know.

6oz digestive biscuit crumbs

2oz sugar

3oz butter, melted

2x 8oz packets of cream cheese, softened (now sold as 200g)

1x 14oz can sweetened condensed milk (now sold as 405g)

3 eggs

4 tablespoons lemon juice

1x 8oz carton of sour cream at room temperature (this is what we usually leave out now)

sliced fresh fruit, or soft fruit, such as raspberries (the original recipe suggested a can of pie filling, which I admit is something I never did try! – the 'best cheesecake ever' version was topped with sour cream and decorated with blueberries and sliced star fruit (which looks as well as tastes beautiful).

Preheat oven to 150C. We use bottom right (baking) oven of aga

Combine crumbs, sugar and melted butter, and press firmly on bottom of a 9inch diameter round spring-form cake tin. (This is worth investing in as it means that you can remove your cheesecake very easily, without leaving half of it in the tin!)

In a large bowl, beat cheese until fluffy. Gradually beat in the condensed milk until smooth. Add eggs and lemon juice and mix well. Pour on top of the crumb layer. Bake for 50-55 mins or until centre is set. (about 40 mins in aga baking oven). Top with sour cream, bake for 5 mins more. Cool, then chill and decorate. It really does taste better chilled well, so make sure you make it far enough in advance to do this. It also comes out of the tin **much** more easily if you wait until its thoroughly cold!

You can top with sour cream without re-baking, or if you're feeling very indulgent used whipped double cream and fruit (esp. good with strawberries), but I think its so delicious without that I don't usually use anything except the fruit now – the most recent workshop offering (which was the prompt to write this up) was decorated with frozen raspberries, the juice of which gently soaked into the top of the cheesecake as they defrosted – yum!

It keeps well in the fridge, though the likelihood of you ever having to store it for long is small!

Happy baking and eating