

RUSTIC CHEESECAKE WITH PRALINÉ SAUCE

2 cups ground chocolate wafers
1/2 stick butter, melted
3 pounds cream cheese, cubed and room temperature
3 cups sugar
6 eggs
1 cup heavy cream
1/2 cup flour
Pinch of salt
2 Tsp pure vanilla extract
1 cup brown sugar
2 Tbsp light corn syrup
2 Tbsp butter
Pinch of salt
1/2 cup sweetened condensed milk
1 1/2 cups pecan pieces
2 cups sweetened whipped cream
Sprigs of fresh mint

Preheat oven to 325 degrees.

In a mixing bowl, combine the ground wafers and melted butter, together. Mix well. Press the crust on the bottom of a 10-inch spring-form pan.

In a food processor fitted with a metal blade, puree the cream cheese until smooth. Add 2 cups of sugar and process until incorporated. With the machine running, add the eggs, one at a time. Add the cream, flour, salt and 1 teaspoon vanilla, mix well. Using a rubber spatula, scrape down the sides of the processor. Process until the batter is smooth. Pour the batter over the crust.

Bake for 1 hour and 15 minutes or until the center is firm. Remove from the oven and run a knife around the sides of the pan. Cool on a wire rack. Serve either at room temperature or chilled.

In a heavy-bottomed saucepan, combine the remaining sugar, brown sugar, corn syrup, butter, pinch of salt, and condensed milk. With a wooden spoon, stir until the sugar dissolves. Continue to cook, stirring, until smooth and light brown, about 8 minutes.

Add the remaining vanilla and pecan pieces and continue to cook, stirring, until the mixture reaches 234 to 240 degrees F on a candy thermometer or the soft ball stage. Remove from the heat and pour over the cheesecake. Let sauce cool and then slice into individual servings.

Garnish each slice with a dollop of whipped cream and a sprig of mint.