

Pumpkin Cheesecake With Pecan Praline Topping

Chef Al Ian

1 15 oz can pumpkin puree (1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups)
8 whole graham crackers, broken (or substitute already crumble crackers)
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups pecans, (2 oz.)
1 tablespoon light brown sugar
5 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted, plus more for greasing the pan
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups cream cheese (14 oz) at room temperature
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups granulated sugar
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon cinnamon
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon freshly ground nutmeg
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground cloves
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground allspice
5 large eggs at room temperature
1 cup heavy cream at room temperature
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
Pecan Praline Topping (recipe follows) and whipped cream, for serving.

1. Set a rack over a baking sheet and line the rack with 2 layers of paper towels. Spread the pumpkin puree over the paper and let drain for 2 hours, until the puree is fairly dry.

2. Preheat the oven to 500°. Butter the bottom and sides of a 9-inch springform pan. In the food processor, pulse the graham crackers until finely ground. Add the pecans and brown sugar and pulse until finely ground. Add the melted butter and pulse just until incorporated. Press the crumbs onto the bottom of the pan. Bake the crust for 8 minutes, just until it is fragrant and lightly browned. Let the crust cool completely.

3. In the bowl of a standing electric mixer fitted with the paddle, beat the cream cheese until it is very smooth. In a small bowl, whisk the sugar with the salt, cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, and allspice. With the machine on, add the spiced sugar to the cream cheese and beat until creamy, scraping the bottom and sides of the bowl. Carefully add the drained pumpkin puree and beat until smooth. Add the eggs one at a time, beating well and scraping down the bowl after each addition. Beat in the heavy cream, lemon juice, and vanilla until the cheesecake mixture is smooth.

4. Pour the cheesecake mixture over the cooled crust and bake for 12 minutes. Lower the oven temperature to 225° and bake the cheesecake for about 3 hours until an instant-read thermometer inserted in the center registers 150°; the center will be very jiggly but not liquidy. Let the cheesecake cool on a rack, then cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight.

5. Run a hot knife around the cheesecake and loosen the springform ring. Carefully remove the ring and transfer the cake to a plate. Using the warm knife, cut the cake into wedges and serve with the Pecan Praline Topping and whipped cream..

MAKE AHEAD The cheesecake can be refrigerated for up to 3 days.

This recipe makes 12 servings so will be doubled for our dinner.

PECAN PRALINE TOPPING

1 ½ sticks unsalted butter
¾ cup dark brown sugar
½ cup heavy cream
¼ teaspoon salt
2 cups pecans (8 oz)

1. Preheat the oven to 350°. In a large saucepan, combine the butter and the brown sugar and cook over moderate heat, stirring until smooth. Stir in the heavy cream and salt and bring to a boil. Simmer just until slightly thickened, and 3 minutes. Let the caramel cool.

2 Spread the pecans on a rimmed baking sheet and toast for about 8 minutes, until they are lightly browned and fragrant. Transfer the pecans to a work surface and let them cool. Coarsely chop the nuts, stir them into the cool caramel and serve.

MAKE AHEAD The topping can be refrigerated for up to 1 week.

Rewarm slightly before serving.

This recipe makes 3 cups so will be doubled for our dinner.