

06/03/11 - Caramel Cheesecake With Cashew Brittle
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The brown, buttery, maple tinged flavor of caramel is very hard to resist. Experimenting with a basic cheesecake recipe I came up with this cake. The presentation makes a big impression on your guests and the taste is guaranteed to please. Shavuot is such a good excuse; stop watching your diet for a moment and have a little goodie. Don't forget there are a million other reasons to have a party or brunch coming up. Graduation, Fathers Day, birthdays, showers the list goes on.

For the caramel:

1 and 1/3 cup granulated sugar

2 tablespoons corn syrup

2 sticks or one cup unsalted butter

¾ cup whipping cream

½ teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon vanilla

For the crust:

2 cups coarsely ground pecans

5 tablespoons of unsalted butter melted.

For the filling:

4 eight ounce packages real cream cheese, room temperature

1 and 1/3 cup granulated sugar

4 eggs

1 tablespoon lemon juice

1/3 cup caramel

2 teaspoons vanilla

For topping #1:

2 cups sour cream

¼ cup sugar

1 teaspoon vanilla

For topping #2

2/3 cup caramel

For the decoration: Cashew Brittle:

1 and 1/2 cups granulated sugar

½ cup water

½ cup roasted and salted cashews

To make the caramel place the room temperature butter in a small saucepan and add the cream. Place over medium heat and bring to a simmer, not boil. Turn off the heat and set aside.

In another small heavy bottom saucepan, heat the sugar and corn syrup on medium heat. The sugar will slowly dissolve and blend with the corn syrup. Do not stir; do not try to scrape down the side of the pan. You can swirl the pan a bit now and then. Do not walk away; all of a sudden you will notice the edges of the melted sugar starting to turn gold. Watch the mix very closely. Bit by bit the syrup will turn golden caramel color. When the syrup is all rich amber color, turn down the heat. At this exact moment add the butter and cream blend, stir in the salt and the vanilla using a wood spoon. Turn the heat to medium low and cook the caramel for about 1 minute, it will thicken a little. Set the caramel aside.

Pre heat the oven to 350 °. Next make the cheesecake crust. Place the ground pecans and melted butter in the bottom of a 9 inch round or square spring form pan. Mix the nuts and butter with your fingertips and then push the moist nuts down, into all corners and across the whole bottom of the pan. You can use your fingertips or the back of a spoon as you flatten the ground nuts into a bottom crust.

Now make the cheesecake batter. In the bowl of a stand or handheld mixer, beat the room temperature cream cheese until light and fluffy. Add the sugar, beat until combined and then add the eggs, caramel, lemon, and vanilla. Blend until smooth and well combined. Pour the batter into the prepared crust. Set the spring form pan on a cookie sheet with sides to catch any dripping that may ooze out during cooking.

Bake the cheesecake for 45 to 50 minutes until puffed in the middle and golden. The cake should not appear to be liquid in the center. Remove the cake from the oven and set aside for 15 minutes. Mix the topping ingredients, for topping number 1. After the 15 minutes, spread the sour cream topping to within ½ inch of the edge of the hot cheesecake. The cheesecake may have formed a crack and this topping



Return the cheesecake to the oven for another 5 minutes to set the topping. Remove the cake from the oven and cool for 1 hour and then refrigerate for 1 hour or more. Remove the cake from the refrigerator and pour topping number 2, the caramel, over the top. Now refrigerate the cheesecake for up to 3 days, until you are ready to serve it.



While the cheesecake cures, make the brittle. Prepare a silpat lined cookie sheet with sides. Melt the sugar and water in a heavy small saucepan. Do not stir; you can only swirl a little. When the sugar and water melt, the syrup will begin to boil. Let the syrup boil, without stirring, until it turns beautiful clear amber. Add the

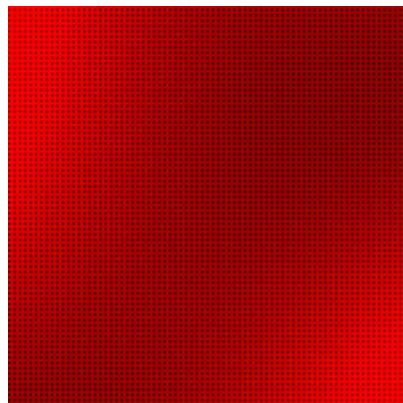


Take care not to burn yourself. Tilt the pan from side to side to spread the syrup into a thin sheet. The brittle hardens almost immediately. Keep the cooled brittle air



When you are going to serve the cake, go around the perimeter with a sharp knife to loosen it from the edge of the pan. Unlock the spring form pan and release the cake. Slide a long flat metal spatula under the cake to remove it from the bottom of the spring form pan. Place the cheesecake on a flat serving platter. Break the cashew brittle in large shards and place them upright into the top of the cheesecake. See the picture. Enjoy.

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