

Secrets of a Cheesecake Goddess

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Wise Woman Ways Farm
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INTRODUCTION

In my chosen life path I am a healer and a knowledge keeper. My father, the late Chief Two Trees, was a healer. And my great-grandmother, Eyes of Fire, was also a healer. You might say it is a path that has genetic implications. Food is one facet of the 'diamond of healing' and sharing food is yet another facet. I have for over twenty years, used this aspect of wellness to assist my loved ones, friends and customers to attain their own improved state of well-being.

As a woman, I like sharing the comforts of my home and my ability to create food that is healthy for your body and healing for your soul. It comes easily and gracefully and I derive a sense of peace and fulfillment when others share my kitchen and my table.

Deciding to become a Cheesecake Goddess is a wise choice. Where else can a woman shine with such love and impart such supreme benevolence besides in the creation of culinary delights for those chosen devotees to partake? I loved the movie "Simply Irresistible" with actress Sarah Michelle Gellar. Why? Not because of the love story, although that part is nice, but because the movie shows an aspect of cooking that I have long known existed. Whatever emotion you put into your creations is what the participant will receive when they eat. Call it 'the healing energy of foods'. The intention behind your thought permeates the food you are preparing.

In the following pages I have tried not only to present you with excellent recipes and ideas for a gorgeous presentation but also instructions for you to imprint your creations with your own unique gifts.

"People will forget what you say, they will forget what you do...but they will never forget how you make them feel"

Author Unknown

Cheesecake is the number one dessert in America and you won't find many people, either young or old, who don't like cheesecake.

Cheesecakes are easy to prepare and require a minimal of ingredients to make them both delicious and impressive. And with the 'secrets' I am about to introduce, you'll be able to whip out something that is 'fit for gods' in no time at all.

As a Cheesecake Goddess, my time is something I consider very valuable. And so is yours. I have guided you to simple, quick and effective methods for creating something remarkable for you, your family or your guests. Enjoy both the process and the results. Make it memorable and share it with someone. Remember being a Cheesecake Goddess is an ever unfolding process. Just like the creation of stunning cheesecakes.

Why cheesecake?

- Cheesecake seems to have a direct connection to the heart. It's one of the premier 'comfort foods' for people in the United States.
- I have *never* had anyone be in anything less than a positive emotion while eating cheesecake.
- Eating together brings people closer. In today's world, even though we may live next door to one another, we are very distant from each other. I have yet to throw an impromptu cheesecake get together and have anyone be less than smiling and friendly by the time they leave. And they *always* make sure I know their name and where they live and which cheesecake is their favorite.
- Eating cheesecake is a joyful experience.

- When you make something 'special' for people, they feel honored and treasured. A true Cheesecake Goddess doesn't command adoration. It's gladly given by the people she chooses to share her creations with.

A Cheesecake Goddess is concerned with the core ingredient of an abundant life...having a positive impact on the world around you. In the following pages I will reveal to you delightful, alluring and enchanting means of making a simple pleasure into something that could only be produced by someone 'divine' and a true Cheesecake Goddess 😊

CHEESECAKE GODDESS SECRET NUMBER ONE

The first 'secret' is taking the small amount of time necessary to select a recipe that enhances the experience or the occasion of the meal for the people involved.

By asking yourself a few simple questions you can assure that the cheesecake you're making fits the need in an exquisite manner and detail. After all, the real reason behind the cheesecake is to afford your guests with a glorious eating experience that will have such memories, that their mouths water, they get a glazed look in their eyes and sigh deeply at the mere suggestion of that particular cheesecake experience.

Is the cheesecake going to compliment the meal?

Will it be the main focal point? Or is it part of a holiday or special occasion, such as a graduation or birthday celebration. Is it for a sweetheart? Or your mother?

Do the people who are going to eat the cheesecake have special diets that need to be taken into consideration? Do they have strong likes and dislikes in food?

Answering these questions before you begin will set you on a path to a successful creation that provides a delightful experience for both you and your guests. After all, receiving adulation in response to your cheesecake provides one of those perks I call ...instant gratification...definitely a 'yesss' moment.

I can already tell you that a 'meat and potatoes' kind of person rarely likes the fancy, what I would call 'designer' cheesecakes. They are the type of people that eat either vanilla or chocolate ice cream every time and most certainly would *never* consider eating Neapolitan flavor. You may be asking yourself, "How am I supposed to make a cheesecake into an eventful experience for them?" Actually, it's much easier than you think. Small, subtle changes can produce results that will make it into an exalting dining experience for their taste buds.

Examples would be making the crust from nuts such as hazelnuts and pairing with chocolate cheesecake, or almonds paired with a plain cheesecake topped with mandarin orange slices, or pecans paired with a plain cheesecake with a bit of praline sauce drizzled over it.

Making the basic cheesecake into a richer experience for their taste buds is another thought. I will often make the cheesecake with more eggs or a hint of flavor rather than an all out assault to the taste buds. You can add just a touch of spice, such as cinnamon, so that the flavor teases the palate at the very end of each bite.

If you are going to use nuts as the crust you need to be aware that various nuts have different oil content and the crust recipe butter content will need to be adjusted accordingly. Of all the nuts I use, walnuts have the most oil that seems to need recipe adjustment. Yet, don't discount this ingredient, as the flavor is well worth the minor recipe adjustment. Walnuts flavor is such an enhancement for your cheesecakes. Pair it with cinnamon apples for a memorable taste.

One of my favorite nuts to use is pistachios. I use this crust in my Spumoni cheesecake. I buy them raw from growers in New Mexico, roast them slowly in the oven, remove their skins and grind them in a food processor.

Another much underutilized nut is the pinon. I purchase them from New Mexico and roast them myself. The flavor they lend to a crust is unusual and different than what most Americans are accustomed to. Don't substitute the ones you buy in the grocery stores, they aren't fresh and have a different type flavor. Buying ingredients that are fresh and are either grown or harvested sustainably is a very important aspect in outstanding flavor.

The pinons I get are usually wild harvested by the Native Americans in New Mexico and Arizona. All of the sources for my different type ingredients are listed at the end of this book. The people are nice to deal with, they make every effort to help and you are assisting someone in small farm sustainable agriculture.

Do any of your guests require special diet adjustments? Such as a person who is diabetic or one who needs a lower fat content? Cheesecakes can be easily adaptable for either of these two problems and will still have outstanding flavor, texture and richness. Splenda is an excellent alternative to sugar. It doesn't have the difficulties with baking as Equal or the questionable health drawbacks and is readily recommended by the medical establishment. For a honey substitute, I use agave nectar. It's made from the agave cactus and won't affect the blood sugar levels. You can buy it at most health food stores or have them order it for you and it comes with a conversion chart for cooking and baking. Its flavor is similar to light clover honey.

When I have needed to make a non-sugar cheesecake I make the cake rich with eggs and a full flavored nut crust. Usually other people are eating that don't have this health issue so I prepare a 'buffet' of toppings. Fresh fruit tossed with a nice flavored liqueur, curls of dark, milk, white and bittersweet chocolates...both separate and mixed, and a chocolate ganache. The list can be quite encompassing or just a few offerings. This gives your guests the opportunity to add to an already delicious cheesecake.

Store bought low fat cheeses are terrible in taste and alter the texture of the cheesecake. It's better to just make your own cheese for this baking need and I will cover that base with you in the next 'secret'.

If your meal has a theme such as French or Italian or even Chinese (lichee nuts make both a beautiful and subtle flavored fruit for a cheesecake) then coordinating the flavors assures an ending that compliments the meal. Having a big meal and ending it with a heavy feeling desert will leave your guest, friends or family uncomfortable and with a prelude to indigestion. It's so much easier to alter your cheesecake by using more eggs and less cheese (the cheesecake has a mousse like texture), or a phyllo pastry crust or even a 'no crust' cheesecake such as the original New York style.

Top it with a small amount of fresh fruit and garnished with a mint leaf. You'll still have a delicious dessert with a lovely presentation.

If you really want to 'wow' them...Sur La Table has edible gold. It comes in petals, leaves or powder. It's beautiful on a plain white cheesecake, but on chocolate or a deeper colored cheesecake, it's downright stunning. There is also something called 'lustre dust', which is a cheaper version. These are metallic gels that are added to a frosting or topping.

The effect is similar to adding glitter. I add them to a heavy whipped cream and place it as a dollop on the top of the individual serving or it's really gorgeous when you add it to a raspberry coulis (a type of puree). That beautiful deep ruby red with glitters of gold, just puddle it under the cheesecake, place the slice on the puddle of coulis, drizzle some coulis over the top and place either a gold leaf or a few petals at the side or on top of the cheesecake piece. Mmmm, a veritable feast for the eyes too!

If you're going to add liqueurs to the cheesecake, topping or garnish you might want to make your own and keep them handy. Making liqueurs and cordials is very easy. You need alcohol (vodka or brandy), sugar, fruits or berries, and time. Just remember that your liqueur is only as good as the ingredients you use. Poor quality liqueurs added to your recipe will result in poor taste.

Although the alcohol will cook out of the cheesecake and leave the flavor, adding it to a topping or coulis will have the full effect of the alcohol content. Be sure your guests are aware of any alcohol content.

You will find a few recipes for some simpler liqueurs in the below, along with web sites that have a very large variety of recipes in the resources section.

I recently was introduced to a delightful liqueur made by an acquaintance of mine. He used the fruit of the prickly pear cactus and produced a beautiful ruby colored liqueur with a stunning aroma. I am devising ways to create a cheesecake, a topping and coulis from this. Look for its introduction and uses in Cheesecake Goddess II.

CHEESECAKE GODDESS SECRET NUMBER TWO

This secret sounds difficult, but it's really very easy. The crux of a fantastic cheesecake lies in its cheese. How do you get the absolute best cheese? The answer is (drum roll here)...make it yourself. Okay, I heard that groan. No, it isn't hard and no it isn't time consuming. The cheese making process itself takes time, but your part is pretty minimal.

You could go all out and actually make the cheeses that go into the savory cheesecakes, but unless you find you have a real affinity for cheese making, I would say skip it. The soft cheese is the largest proportion of the ingredients. The small amount of other cheese types you might use in a recipe can be bought in a gourmet deli or through the internet. The cost won't be significant, it will have excellent flavor and it will save you a great deal of time. The only cheese that is fun for the whole family to make is mozzarella. It's a lot like making taffy and kids love the process. Ricki Carroll of the New England Cheesemaking Supply Company has an excellent and easy 30 minute recipe (it's in the recipe chapter) and her company is an excellent source of cheese making supplies for the beginner or those of you making small amounts. She also has written an excellent book on the 'how to' of cheese making along with many fine recipes. I would highly recommend you purchase a copy as a reference and source for easy recipes. Who knows, you could be the next serious artisan cheese maker.

Fiasco Farm has even more easy and simple cheese recipes for both a chevre (a soft white goat cheese that is adaptable to any type milk) and a whole milk ricotta. Either of which can be used as the cream cheese substitute. If using goat's milk, the cheesecake has more of a tart flavor than if using cow's milk. And this is a good time to talk about different milks.

Cheese is basically made from milk sitting long enough, at a warm enough temperature, to grow a type of bacteria that will make it what is commonly termed 'clabber' or curdle.

Today's cheese maker brings the milk to a certain temperature, adds a bought culture and then allows the process to run its course with a minimal of interference from human hands. The actual process of cheese making is simple. Let me give you an example. Go to the grocery store and pick up one of the organic plain yogurts. Line a colander with a clean, moistened piece of cheesecloth (this isn't the stuff at the fabric store, it can usually be found in a grocery store and sometimes called butter muslin) and dump the whole container into it. Cover it over with the excess cheesecloth and let it drain for a few hours. After a couple of hours, bring the corners of the cheesecloth together and tie it so it will hang from the faucet above the sink. The weight of the solids will push out the last of the 'whey' or liquid from the yogurt. Once it feels rather firm, like cream cheese, remove it from the cheesecloth and place it on a clean plate. There...you have cheese. I sometimes use this as a replacement for sour cream especially in my topping recipe. I just take it down from the draining stage when it is at the desired consistency. Or add some real maple syrup and a touch of cinnamon and spread it on toasted bagels. Or how about adding some prepared pesto and putting it on crackers or celery for a healthy snack.

Okay back to the milk issue. Just like any other ingredient you would use in any recipe. The quality that you use determines the quality of your results. Since I use the milk from my own animals; goats, sheep and water buffalo, I am able to maintain a very high standard of quality. And unless you can find someone in your area who will sell you fresh milk, your best bet will be using the organic milks found in your local grocery store. Brown Cow and Horizon are dairy companies that sell organic products. Any milk from whole milk to low fat may be used in the cheese making process. The more fat in the milk the richer the cheese.

Here is a simple recipe for soft ricotta cheese. And if you choose, it can be the only recipe you will need to make your cheese to use in your cheesecakes. Here are a few suggestions to make your cheese making experience a pleasurable one with a happy ending.

1. Use stainless steel pots, colander, slotted or regular spoons. The first basic of cheese making is that everything must be scrupulously clean and without residue (if you use a culture it's much more important if you want your cheese to turn out). Stainless is easy to use and easy to clean. It used to be expensive but watch for sales or visit Sam's, I often pick up great deals there.
2. Invest in good cheesecloth and butter muslin. They can be used over and over again. Keeping them clean is a breeze; I throw them in a separate wash with a tad of hydrogen peroxide and a bit of baking soda. You can buy a package of 3 for around six bucks. Places to purchase them are listed in the resources chapter.
3. Purchase a digital cooking thermometer. It saves a lot of time and frustration when you are trying to do other things and get the milk to the correct temperature.

Ricotta Cheese

2 quarts of whole milk

3 Tbsp. white vinegar or ¼ cup strained fresh lemon juice

In a heavy pot heat the whole milk to 200 degrees. Add either the white vinegar or the lemon juice. Return the milk temperature to 200 degrees.

Remove the pot from the heat and set, covered, to sit undisturbed for 15 minutes.

Line a colander with fine cheesecloth (often called butter muslin).

Place the colander over a large pot in order to catch the whey (liquid part of the cheese making process) being careful as the liquid is hot.

Tie the ends of the cheesecloth together and hang the cheese to drain for about an hour. The longer it drains the drier the cheese will be.

There...now you have it, you just made your very own homemade cheese. Simple, wasn't it? You can freeze this cheese and it stays well for up to a year. Just make sure your container is filled completely or you place plastic wrap on the top of the cheese to keep air away from the surface to prevent freezer burn.

The liquid from cheese making is called whey and contains the water soluble proteins, vitamins (especially the B's) and minerals that are in the milk. Many people throw this away except it has any number of good uses. Here is a partial list of its many uses.

- Liquid in bread baking
- As a part of soup stock
- As the liquid to cook pasta or beans (increase cooking time slightly)
- Food for chickens or pigs
- To moisten dog or cat food
- Water plants-if you use the vinegar recipe rather than adding a culture, feed it to only acid-loving plants
- As a liquid to reconstitute dried foods such as falafel, hummus, or black beans.

CHEESECAKE GODDESS SECRET NUMBER THREE

Number three has very wide spread impacts on peoples lives because it affects their health, which in turn effects their careers, family, income and friends. I'm a big sustainable agriculture fan and practice the techniques myself. And hopefully I can briefly educate you enough to influence your thoughts concerning your purchases of the future.

In a nutshell, sustainable agriculture is the practice of being a 'steward' to the land that is being farmed or ranched. It's about being concerned enough as a human occupying this planet to make sure there is a wholesome place left for many generations to come. And it encompasses caring enough about your customers to see to their health and well being.

The majority of people know of parts of sustainable agriculture as 'organic', except it is much more than that. Managing pastureland to promote growth and prevent erosion, assuring that the wet lands are maintained in order that birds and other wild life can have necessary habitats to thrive and reproduce, protecting the top soil, conservation of water and much more. Since this isn't a book about that subject I won't go into very much detail. Yet it is very much an important part of any food you consume and it does impact the flavor and health benefits that you receive from your food. Those of you interested in learning more, I would recommend starting with Acres USA. Those people have been practicing and promoting sustainable agriculture actively and politically for many years and their expertise is well known world wide.

What does sustainable agriculture have to do with your food? For one, how something is grown reflects in your health. Basically we are 'what we eat'. If the products you purchase haven't been grown in a healthy environment, then they themselves cannot be healthy and therefore can hardly help you be healthy.

Plants get their nutrition from the soil they have been grown in. Likewise the animals that eat the plants get their nutrition from the plants. And we then get our nutrition from healthy, or nonhealthy whatever the case may be, plants and animals.

You begin to see the links in the chain here. I can tell you from experience and from a great deal of studying and research, that the majority of the food you buy in the grocery stores is poor quality. That both taste and nutritional quality is at its' lowest ebb in what you purchase in our stores. I am hardly telling you anything you were not aware of on some level. Despite what big business thinks, we the consumers are not stupid. This is where I get up on my soap box and say to you, "buy locally from farmers who are practicing sustainable agriculture". Join a CSA, a community supported agriculture, farm. You are part of that farm. Maybe not in working or living on it, but in making sure that the small farmer has a ready market for the food they produce. You are promoting stewardship of the earth and assuring that small scale agriculture can stay in business and prosper. Farming isn't for everyone, although certainly we all need what our farmers produce. It's a physically hard job, with long hours, no 'benefits' and goes way beyond the meaning of 'demanding'.

Those people that dedicate their lives to help us eat well need our support. I sincerely doubt if large, corporate agribusiness is in it for anything else except their profit. And like many other large corporate businesses, they don't seem to be at all concerned about leaving something for this generation much less any of the following generations. Find out who your local farmers are, go to your local farmers market and buy, or better yet, join a CSA. Get involved with assisting local farmers to have ready markets for their food. After all...it's your health that is involved.

I know for a fact that my own home grown eggs make a significant difference in the taste of my cheesecakes. How do I know? I have made them with my eggs, regular store bought eggs and store bought 'free range' eggs. There is a definite difference in taste, and not just by my own taste buds. I had different people try the cheesecakes made with the various eggs. The majority of them selected the one made with my eggs. A few couldn't tell the difference between my eggs and the store bought organic, free range eggs.

Nobody selected the cheesecake made with regular store bought eggs. Where do you find fresh eggs? Look in your local Thrifty Nickel type newspaper under 'farm and ranch' or 'livestock' heading. There is usually someone selling 'farm fresh eggs'. Better yet, get a few of your own. They are easy to keep and require a minimum of maintenance. They can be kept in a cage up of the ground and let out in your yard at your leisure. Your local feed and livestock store can order chicks for you. Most begin carrying them around March.

Everyone has their favorite breeds but if you want pretty chickens with excellent laying ability I heartily recommend either the Black Australorp or the Buff Orpington breed. If you're looking for the eggs that are naturally Easter egg colored then the Araucana is the girl for you.

A nice article for instructions on raising baby chicks is on the internet. Written by those folks at Mother Earth News (the original back to the land people) in the March/April 1977 issue. It is a simple and an excellent article.

CHEESECAKE GODDESS SECRET NUMBER FOUR

One of the qualities that makes a great chef is their lack of fear when it comes to experimentation. There will be some of you who are very experienced cooks and others who are limited in their experience. Yet, 'to be daring' will propel your cheesecakes onto another level more than anything else. A quality that I have intentionally cultivated, that has led me to create some very unique and delectable cheesecakes is to look at *any recipe* and convert it into a cheesecake.

How do I do that? By selecting out the essential ingredients that give the predominate taste to the culinary dish. One of my favorite dishes is green chili enchiladas. I know that the outside of an enchilada is made from masa, which is corn meal, so I make the cheesecake crust from cornmeal. If I want to make it even more intense and unusual I may select a corn meal that has a different flavor, such as blue corn or a rose colored corn meal.

I can leave the main body plain such as a cheese enchilada-cheesecake or take it to the next level and add what would have been the enchilada filling in some manner. I have added it between the crust and the cheesecake filling, I have poured a layer of cheesecake filling then placed a thin layer of chicken, beef or pork (I cooked and seasoned this part of the filling layers ahead of time) and then spooned a layer of cheesecake batter over that. I have even made several thin layers alternating between cheesecake batter and filling. All have come out delicious.

The placement and number of layers depend on the intensity of flavor that you desire. The enchilada sauce is then drizzled over each piece individually or thickened and spooned onto the top of the cheesecake and baked another ten minutes. There you have it...a cheesecake lover's enchilada.

Caution: Be aware of the moisture content of any additions or adjustments that you make. An example is green chilies are high in moisture and will make your cheesecake soggy unless they are drained and squeezed.

CHEESECAKE GODDESS SECRET NUMBER FIVE

Okay hang on to your hats here, because secret number five could be a little 'woo-woo' for some of you. Except...if you haven't been keeping up with mind - body medicine you wouldn't be aware of how important two specialties called 'Energy Medicine' and 'Energy Field Therapy' have become in the connection to health and wellness. And even more recently, the work of Dr. Masaru Emoto, whose book "The Hidden Messages in Water" became a NY Times best seller.

What I would like for all you Goddesses to do is put aside your disbelief and try the techniques I am about to tell you. Because I can assure you that these skills are 'big guns' in your arsenal of Goddess Power. So take a break, read this part thoroughly, and practice them a bit. Not only will it become an important aspect to your creations but it will also put you on a path to better health.

First, remember your basic physics? The part where they taught you that the entire Universe is made up of energy. Time to remember, because it is an extremely important idea. The kicker to that idea is the 'add on'...big trumpet blasts here...you, my dear Goddess can direct that energy through your thoughts and hands. Yep, you really can. And even if you think this is silly, ***please don't leave this step out of your cooking.*** Just try it for awhile and I will guarantee that you will see results. And you will wonder why in the world they aren't teaching this in kindergarten.

What I am going to teach you is 'energy exercises'. These techniques stimulate the flow of energy in its' proper channel of direction and allow you to direct the flow of energy. Energy is neither good nor bad...it just is. Your intention behind the energy is what gives it direction.

Two recommendations, you need to purchase one book and download a free copy of another. First buy Donna Eden's book entitled Energy Medicine. No household should be without one. It is that important for health...all of them, physical, mental and emotional. It will be one of the most used resource books in your household. And for a Cheesecake Goddess it is imperative.

In order to wield your power, you have to understand what it is and how to use it.

Secondly go to Gary Craig's web site, www.emofree.com and download his free manual. In case you have doubts about you being a Goddess, or your abilities or any number of things that could affect your full capacity to be a desirable, capable, deserving of adoration Goddess... you want to rid yourself of these. It's simple and extremely effective.

Before you start anything...your cooking...your day...your job. Taking three slow deep breathes while inhaling through the nose and exhaling through your mouth, making the exhalation twice as long as the inhalation... will prime the pump so to speak. I don't think many people realize the significant value that breathing has. Don't ask me why, considering you can't live without doing it.

The first exercise is called the 'Care Bear'. If any of you remember the Care Bear cartoon figures you will remember they all had great big hearts that filled up the majority of their torso. This technique will put you in a joyful frame of mind.

"Do your three breaths first. Then take a deep breath and exhale slowly...as you exhale, place both of your palms down on the center of your chest about 4-5 inches down from your throat. Smile, then take each palm and trace the outline of a heart (one going left and one going right) from the center of your breast bone, down across the breasts and ending at your belly button. Anyone watching would think you are creating the image of a big heart on your body. Repeat a total of three times."

The next set of exercises comes from Donna Eden. These simple exercises should be one of those things you do immediately after getting up in the morning. Believe me when I say it can make the difference between having a good day or a bad day, it can. Plus any time during the day it can be repeated if you feel the need.

Marching in place: Spend about one minute marching in place, making sure that you swing your arms and bring your knees up as far as you can.

Acupressure Point Stimulation: Draw a line with your fingertips from your nipples (okay where your nipples should be) to about mid-way on your body torso. Then slide your fingers about 2-3 inches towards the outside along the rib cage. Bunch your fingertips together and rub in a circular motion on that spot. It is usually sore but keep rubbing until you no longer feel discomfort.

Thymus Thump: Close your fist and rap mid-center on your breast bone half dozen times.

Collar Bone Acupressure Point Stimulation: Locate the pointy notches of your collar bone at the base of your throat. Slide your fingers over to the indentation area slightly over and down. Tap those points vigorously.

Crown Energy Center Opening: Put your thumbs on your temples with your fingers placed in the middle of your forehead touching each other. Slowly draw your fingers across your skin as if you are pulling something open. Do this all the way back and down the crown of your head.

Zip Up: Starting at the top of your pubic bone and ending at the indented space under your bottom lip. Draw a line as if you are zipping up a zipper and locking it in place. As you draw the zipper up say a positive affirmation. Now do the same starting at the top of your tail bone and ending at the cleft right above your upper lip at the same time saying your affirmation (you may not be able to reach, just use your imagination and pretend your finger is tracing the area you can't reach). Repeat this process three times.

The following energy exercises are for you to use right before you begin food preparation.

Take your three deep breaths. Place your hands in a cupping position. As you exhale, visualize the space between your hands filling with a golden light and permeating your hands. Imagine yourself as you are cooking with the light of the Universe permeating the food you are making. You may also infuse the light with suggestions, such as health, vitality, peace for all those lucky souls partaking of your creation.

RECIPES

I enjoy assisting you in whatever way to help create your own sense of being a Cheesecake Goddess. I want you to have fun, enjoy yourself and help create a world that is brighter and more pleasurable.

I have compiled different recipes for your selection of delectables to present your honored guests. Some of the recipes are my own original creations and some are not. If I step on someone's 'chef toes', please accept my apologies.

The beginning recipes are your basics and as with any type of basic recipe it is the foundation upon which you can build any number of other cheesecake creations. Please review the resource section in order to understand some of the techniques used and the 'rules' of turning out a Goddess quality cheesecake. I use the phrase 'creamy cheese' rather than cream cheese since your homemade cheese isn't technically cream cheese. You can make your own cream cheese except it isn't necessary to produce an outstanding cheesecake.

New York Style Cheesecake

32 ounces of creamy cheese
16 ounces of sour cream
¼ pound of unsalted butter
5 eggs
2 Tbsp. cornstarch
1 ¼ cup of sugar
1 ¼ tsp. of vanilla
1 tsp. of lemon juice

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Blend cream cheese, sour cream and butter well. Add the cornstarch, sugar, vanilla and lemon juice. Blend the eggs one at a time, careful not to over beat.

Pour the batter into a buttered 9 inch springform pan. Set in a **water bath** (see resource section) in the center of the oven. Bake for one hour until the top is golden brown. Turn off the oven and let it cool in the oven for one hour with the door propped open with a wooden spoon. Remove the cake pan from the water bath and let it cool on the counter after running a knife around the edges to loosen it. Chill at least 4 hours but preferably overnight.

I use this as a basic recipe and often alter it to suit the flavor I desire. It makes for a lighter cheesecake than some I have made and can actually be a mousse cake if only chilled for 2 hours. But cutting is tricky as it is very soft and its texture remains light and creamy rather than the very dense cheesecake many are accustomed to.

Classic Philly Cheesecake

1c. graham cracker crumbs
3 Tbsp. butter
3 Tbsp. sugar
5 8 ounce pkgs. cream cheese
1 c. sugar
3 Tbsp. flour
1 Tbsp. vanilla
1 c. sour cream
4 eggs

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees (or 300 degrees is using a dark nonstick spring form pan). Combine the graham cracker crumbs, 3 Tbsp. of sugar and butter and press firmly in the bottom of a 9 inch spring form pan and bake for 10 minutes.

Mix the cream cheese, one cup of sugar, flour, and vanilla with an electric mixer on medium speed until well blended. Add the sour cream and mix well. Add eggs one at a time, only mixing until well blended on low speed. Pour the mixture over the crust.

Bake for 1 hour and 10 minutes or until the center is almost set. Loosen the cake from the edges. Cool thoroughly before removing the pan. Refrigerate at least 4 hours or overnight.

This recipe is the original Kraft cream cheese cheesecake and still turns out a nice richly dense confection. It is fine as another basic recipe to build upon.

Dr. Bob's Limoncello Cheesecake

Crust:

4 Tbsp. butter, melted
1 c. graham cracker crumbs
½ c. hazelnut cookies
2 Tbsp. sugar

Batter:

32 oz. of soft creamy cheese
1 ½ c. sugar
4 Tbsp. flour
¼ tsp. salt
½ tsp. lemon zest
4 eggs
½ c limoncello liqueur

Topping:

2 c. sour cream
¼ c. sugar
1 tsp. limoncello liqueur

Crumb the cookies, mix with the graham cracker crumbs and melted butter. Press the mixture into the bottom of a 9 inch spring form pan and one inch up the sides.

Beat together the cream cheese and sugar until smooth and fluffy. Add one egg at a time without excessive beating. Follow by mixing in the remaining batter ingredients. Pour into the pan and bake at 350 degrees for 50-60 minutes until the center of the surface is somewhat solid.

Remove from the oven and let the cake rest for 10 minutes. Mix together the sour cream, sugar and limoncello and spread evenly on the top. Bake another ten minutes, remove and let cool at room temperature. Refrigerate at least 4 hours, preferably overnight.

I want to interject another subject here as the previous recipe can be used to create any number of wonderful cheesecakes. Substitute a blood orange liqueur, or a tangerine liqueur for the limoncello. Most liqueurs can be easily made at home and are an excellent way to make your own unique cheesecakes. Please remember that if the liqueur is cooked with the batter then the alcohol evaporates, but when it's in an uncooked topping such as a coulis or compote then the alcohol content remains.

Tangerine or Blood Orange Liqueur

10 organic tangerines or blood oranges washed
1 quart of vodka
3 cups of sugar
4 cups of water
Juice of 2 blood oranges or tangerines strained and frozen

Remove all the zest of the tangerines or blood oranges (orange part only) and place in a jar with a tight fitting lid. Add the vodka and leave in a cool dark place for one month.

After the one month then combine sugar, water and juice in a saucepan and bring to a boil, stirring until the sugar is completely dissolved. Let it cool completely.

Add the syrup to the vodka mixture. Strain in order to remove the zest and pour into glass bottles and stopper them. It will keep indefinitely if stored in a cool place. It will also make an excellent drink served chilled over crushed ice.

Add the liqueur to fresh fruits that will either compliment the citrus flavor or add to fresh tangerine or blood orange slices to make a very intense flavored compote to pour over the cheesecake. (Fruit compotes are juice and fruit thickened with cornstarch. It can be served warm or room temperature). Remember...more is not necessarily better.

Limoncello Raspberry Chipotle Cheesecake

I love this cheesecake. It reflects the flavors of the Southwest, and what a wonderfully complex group of flavors those can be. In this recipe you have the 'sweet heat' that 'chili heads' are so well known to love. You can make your own raspberry chipotle sauce or buy a variety offered in the condiments section of your grocery store. Just in case it isn't available the resources section has a listing for a source.

Use the previous batter recipe with the addition of the raspberry chipotle sauce. You can use it either of two ways. One, pour half cup of the sauce on top of the batter and then gently swirl a knife through the sauce to introduce it to the batter. Or gently heat the sauce and spoon over the cheesecake slice before serving. The amount also depends upon the recipients taste for the 'heat'.

I usually change the crust to a pecan crust or leave a crust off entirely. This cheesecake has enough flavor to stand on its own without the addition of a crust.

Raspberry Chipotle Sauce

- 1 c. raspberries unsweetened (frozen or fresh)
- 2 Tbsp. sugar
- ¼ c. ruby port
- 1 drained can of whole chipotle chilies in adobo

In a small saucepan combine the sauce ingredients and simmer, stirring occasionally until the sugar is dissolved. Puree the sauce and strain into a bowl. Place in a bottle and refrigerate. Will keep for 3 weeks.

Spumoni Cheesecake

One of my favorite ice creams is the Italian spumoni, which is pistachio ice cream. I had a great time creating this cheesecake and just closing my eyes and biting into it brings back delightful childhood memories. It can be cut into small pieces and then frozen. Serve drizzled with warm chocolate sauce.

Crust:

1 ½ c. crushed cannoli shells
4 Tbsp. unsalted butter, melted
2 Tbsp. sugar

Batter:

2 ½ lbs creamy cheese
1 ½ c. sugar
1 lemon, zested
1 orange, zested
½ tsp. vanilla extract
3 Tbsp. all purpose flour
5 eggs
2 egg yolks
½ c. sour cream

Topping:

Pistachio preserves

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Butter the bottom of a 9 inch springform pan. In a mixing bowl combine the cannoli crumbs, butter and sugar and mix well. Press onto the bottom of the springform pan and bake about 8 minutes. Set aside to cool. When it is completely cooled butter the sides of the pan.

Lower the oven temperature to 350 degrees. In a large mixing bowl with an electric mixer on low speed combine the creamy cheese, sugar, zests and vanilla and beat until creamy. Add the flour, then the eggs and yolks one at a time, mixing well after each addition.

Add the sour cream and mix until smooth. Pour the mixture into the prepared pan, wrap the pan in double foil and place in a water bath half way up the sides.

Bake for 1½ hours. Transfer the cake to a cooling rack and let it cool completely. Refrigerate the cake overnight before serving.

Place each slice on a plate and spoon the pistachio preserves over the cake slice. Add a dollop of heavy cream that has been whipped, on top of the slice and garnish with a mint leaf.

Pistachio Preserves:

1 pound of shelled raw pistachios

2 c. sugar

½ c. water

In a medium bowl pour the water over the pistachios and allow it to sit for 3 minutes. Drain the nuts then rub them with a cloth towel to remove their skins. In a food processor grind the nuts finely.

In a heavy saucepan, bring the sugar and water to a boil over medium heat, stirring constantly. When the sugar is dissolved, add the ground pistachios and continue to cook, stirring constantly until thick. Cool, place in tightly covered jars and store in the refrigerator for up to three months.

Caramel-Bourbon Cheesecake with a Walnut Crust

Sauce:

1 c. packed dark brown sugar
½ c. whipping cream
1/3 c. butter, softened
2 Tbsp. bourbon

Crust:

3 c. walnut pieces
1 c. granulated sugar, divided use
3 Tbsp. melted butter

Batter:

24 oz. of creamy cheese
3 large eggs
¼ c. bourbon

Sauce:

In a small saucepan combine brown sugar, whipping cream and butter. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat; boil for 3 minutes. Remove 1/3 cup of the sauce; refrigerate until chilled. To the remaining sauce add 2 Tbsp. bourbon and set aside.

Crust:

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees. Combine the walnut pieces and ¼ cup granulated sugar in a food processor. Pulse until it resembles coarse crumbs. *Do not over process.* Transfer to a medium bowl and stir in the melted butter. Using the back of a spoon press the mixture into the bottom and half way up the sides of a nine inch springform pan. Bake for 15 minutes. Remove from oven and cool.

Batter:

Beat the creamy cheese with the remaining ¾ cup granulated sugar. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating until just blended. Stir in the ¼ cup of bourbon. Pour the cream cheese mixture into the cooled nut crust. Drizzle 1/3 cup of the chilled sauce on top. Using a knife gently swirl the sauce through the batter.

Bake at 325 degrees for one hour. Turn off the oven and, and leave the cheesecake to cool in the oven without opening the door. Remove the cheesecake from the oven and run a knife around the edge to loosen it from the pan. Cool on a wire rack. Cover and refrigerate for at least 4 hours or preferably overnight. Just before serving, toast the walnut pieces in the oven, gently warm the bourbon sauce and stir in the walnuts. Spoon the sauce over the slices of cheesecake.

If you want to make this a cheesecake of pure decadence and cause quite a spectacle, then add edible gold powder to the bourbon sauce. Then a dollop of whipped heavy cream with a few edible gold leaves or rose petals. A very beautiful presentation.

Cordon Rose Cream Cheesecake

- 1 pound of creamy cheese
- 1 c. sugar
- 3 large eggs
- 3 Tbsp. freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 1 ½ tsp. vanilla
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 3 c. sour cream
- 1 Tbsp. cornstarch (optional)

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. In a large mixing bowl beat the creamy cheese and sugar until very smooth (about 3 minutes). Beat in the cornstarch if desired. Add the eggs, 1 at a time, beating after each addition until smooth and scraping down the sides. Add the lemon juice, vanilla and salt and beat until incorporated. Beat in the sour cream until just blended.

Pour the batter into a prepared pan. Set the pan into a water bath with one inch of very hot water. Bake for 45 minutes. Turn off the oven and let the cake cool for one hour without opening the oven door. Remove to a rack and cool to room temperature. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight.

For a much richer and denser cheesecake, replace the three whole eggs with 6 egg yolks.

Prickly Pear Cactus Fruit Cheesecake

Crust:

$\frac{3}{4}$ c. all purpose flour
6 Tbsp. firmly packed brown sugar
 $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. salt
6 Tbsp. chilled unsalted butter cut into pieces
1 Tbsp. cold water
 $\frac{1}{2}$ c. crushed almonds

Batter:

1 c. fresh lime juice, strained
 $\frac{1}{4}$ c. water
2 envelopes of unflavored gelatin
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ c. sugar
5 eggs slightly beaten
2 tsps. grated lime rind
1 stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
16 oz creamy cheese
 $\frac{1}{2}$ c. heavy cream chilled

Topping:

1 envelope of unflavored gelatin
1c. prickly pear syrup
'lustre dust'

Blend the flour, sugar and salt in a food processor by pulsing. Add the butter and process until it resembles cornmeal. Add water and process until moist clumps form. Transfer to a bowl and add the almonds and knead until the dough comes together. Press the dough into the pan and up the sides. Refrigerate until firm, about 30 minutes. Position the rack in the center of a preheated 375 degree oven. Line the crust with foil and either use pie weight or dried beans. Bake about 10 minutes. Remove the foil and the weights and bake until the crust begins to brown, about 10 minutes. Remove from the oven and set aside to cool.

Combine the lime juice and water in a saucepan; sprinkle the gelatin over the top. Let it stand 5 minutes to soften. Stir sugar, eggs and rind into the pan. Cook over medium heat, stirring until almost boiling about 7 minutes or until an instant read thermometer reaches 160 degrees. Do *not* let it boil. Remove from heat.

Beat the butter and the creamy cheese in a large bowl until well mixed, 1 minute. Gradually beat the lime mixture until well blended. Refrigerate, stirring occasionally until the mixture is thick enough to mound slightly when dropped from a spoon, about 45 minutes.

Beat the chilled cream in a small chilled bowl until stiff peaks form. Fold into the lime mixture. Pour into the crust cover and refrigerate until firm, about 3-4 hours.

In a small saucepan sprinkle one package of unflavored gelatin over $\frac{1}{2}$ c prickly pear syrup. Allow to soften by letting it stand for one minute. Place the pan over low heat and stir constantly for 2-3 minutes. Test the mixture by running your finger over the spoon to check for any undissolved granules. Continue to heat until the mixture is smooth and silky. Set aside and allow to cool. Add the luster dust to the intensity desired.

Remove the cheesecake from the refrigerator and slowly pour the mixture evenly over the top of the cheesecake. Return to the refrigerator until firmly set.

Before unmolding, run a sharp knife under hot water, dry it, then run it around the edge of the cheesecake.

To intensify the prickly pear flavor, I sometimes stir in $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of prickly pear *nectar* to the topping mixture before cooling.

Black Cherry Cheesecake

Crust:

- 1 ½ c finely chopped hazelnuts, roasted and skins removed
- 3 Tbsp. butter melted
- 2 Tbsp. sugar

Batter:

- 32 ounces of creamy cheese
- 3 Tbsp. all purpose flour
- 1 c. sugar
- 4 large eggs
- 1 c. sour cream
- ¼ c black cherry juice concentrate (at most health food stores)

Topping:

- 1 package frozen dark cherries, thawed with juice reserved
- 3 Tbsp. cornstarch, sifted
- ½ c. sugar

Preheat oven to 325 degrees F. Combine the nuts, butter and sugar and press into the bottom of a 9 inch springform pan. Bake for 10 minutes. Set crust aside. Raise the oven temperature to 450 degrees.

In a medium bowl combine the cheese, flour and sugar, mixing at medium speed with an electric mixer until well blended. Add eggs, one at a time, blending well but not overly beating. Blend in the sour cream and black cherry juice concentrate. Pour over the crust and bake for ten minutes.

Reduce the temperature to 250 degrees and continue to bake for one hour. Turn off the oven and crack the oven door with a wooden spoon and allow to cool for one hour. Remove to a cake rack and cool to room temperature. Refrigerate at least 4 hours.

In a medium saucepan mix the cornstarch with the sugar. Slowly stir in the reserved cherry juice (about 2 cups) and mix well. Cook the sauce over medium heat, stirring constantly, until the sauce begins to thicken and coats the back of a spoon. Remove from the heat and let it cool slightly. Add the cherries to the sauce and spoon over the individual slices of cheesecake.

To produce an intense cherry flavor, you may add the concentrate to the batter. Just reduce other liquids accordingly. Remember this is a concentrate.

You may add edible gold powder to the sauce for a spectacular finish. Combined with the dark color of the cherries it gives a definite 'wow' to the presentation.

Pomegranate Cheesecake

Crust:

1/4 c. finely chopped pecans
1/4 c. finely chopped almonds
1/4 c. finely chopped walnuts
3/4 c. finely chopped shortbread cookies
2 Tbsp. melted butter

Batter:

1 Tbsp. unsalted butter, softened
16 ounces of ricotta cheese, well drained
1 pound of marscopone cheese
1 c. sugar
4 large eggs, separated
1/3 c. unbleached all purpose flour
1 tsp. salt

Sauce:

2 c. pomegranate juice (you can use concentrate and dilute with
equal amounts of water)
3 Tbsp. cornstarch sifted
3/4 c. sugar

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees. Lightly coat a 9 inch springform pan with butter. Mix the nuts, shortbread cookies and melted butter. Press into the bottom of the pan and 1 1/2 inches up the side. Bake in the center of the oven for 8-10 minutes. Set aside to cool.

In a bowl using an electric mixer, beat the cheese until smooth. Beat in the sugar. Blend in the egg yolks one at a time. Fold in the flour.

In another bowl with clean beaters, beat the egg whites with the salt until stiff peaks form. Fold the egg whites into the cheese mixture. Pour the batter into a pan and smooth the top with a spatula.

Bake for 1 hour and 10 minutes or until a knife inserted into the center comes out clean. Turn off the oven, crack the door with a wooden spoon and leave the cake in the oven for 30 minutes. Remove the cake to a rack and let it cool completely, then cover and refrigerate for at least two hours.

In a medium saucepan mix the cornstarch with the sugar. Slowly stir in the pomegranate juice and mix well. Cook the sauce over medium heat, stirring constantly until the sauce begins to thicken and become deeper in color and coats the back of a spoon. Remove it from the heat and let it cool. It may be stored in the refrigerator and will thicken somewhat. It can be thinned with a little warm water when ready to use.

Run a knife around the edge of the cheesecake to loosen it and remove the sides. Ladle the sauce over each slice of individually served cheesecake.

You can use luster dust or edible gold to add sparkle to the sauce. Edible gold also comes in rose petal shapes or leaf shapes. Adding the sparkle to the sauce then sprinkling the rose petals over top or the leaves at the side of each piece makes for a stunning finale.

Mexican Cheesecake

32 ounces of creamy cheese, softened to room temperature
½ c. butter
2 c. sour cream
1 (15oz) can of cream style corn
1 ½ c. sugar
7 Tbsp. cornstarch
2 Tbsp. lemon juice
1 Tbsp. vanilla extract
5 large eggs

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees. Generously butter a 9 inch springform pan and set aside.

Combine the creamy cheese and butter in a large mixing bowl and beat until creamy. Blend in the sour cream, corn, sugar, cornstarch, vanilla and lemon juice. Add eggs one at a time, incorporating well after each addition.

Pour the batter into the prepared pan and bake for one hour. Turn the oven off and leave the cake in the oven with the door closed for one more hour. Remove from the oven, run a knife around the edges and cool on a cake rack until room temperature. Refrigerate at least four hours before serving.

This cake can easily be adjusted to savory. I leave out the added sugar and add my savory ingredients. Such as chipotle chilies in adobo sauce, chopped green chilies, or chopped black olives. Any one or several Mexican spices or ingredients can be used. You may also add a cornmeal crust.

Green Chile Cheesecake

Crust:

¼ c. unsalted butter
1 c. blue cornmeal
¼ c. boiling water

Batter:

8 fresh green chilies such as Anaheim or poblano
1 ½ c. sour cream
2 large eggs
1 pound creamy cheese, softened
2 Tbsp. unsalted butter
1 c. grated Monterey Jack cheese
1 ½ c. sharp Cheddar cheese
¼ c. chopped fresh cilantro leaves

Topping:

½ fresh papaya
1 c. fresh pineapple cut in small pieces
1 garlic clove
½ c. finely chopped red onion
1 Tbsp. chopped fresh cilantro
2 Tbsp. quality aged balsamic vinegar

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees. Melt the butter in a bowl and stir together with the cornmeal and water. Press the mixture in the bottom of a 9 inch springform pan. Bake in the oven for 10 minutes. Remove and set aside to cool.

Roast and peel the chilies, cutting the tops off and removing the seeds and ribs. Finely chop the chilies, drain and squeeze out excess moisture. In a food processor blend the sour cream and eggs, add the creamy cheese and butter and blend until smooth. Transfer the mixture to the bowl and stir in the chilies, cheese, cilantro and salt to taste. Pour the filling over the crust and bake in the center of the oven for 45 minutes or until the center is just set. Cool the cheesecake completely on a cake rack.

Peel, seed and coarsely chop papaya. Add the pineapple pieces. Mince the garlic. In a bowl stir together the papaya, pineapple, garlic, minced onion, cilantro, vinegar, salt and pepper to taste. Set aside for 30 minutes to allow flavors to blend. Serve salsa on the side with the cheesecake.

Artichoke Cheesecake with Phyllo Crust

Crust:

¼ c. melted butter

6 sheets of thawed phyllo pastry dough

Batter:

3 ounces of marinated artichoke hearts

24 ounces of softened creamy cheese

1 ¼ c. Feta cheese, crumbled

½ tsp. of dried or 1 tsp. of fresh finely chopped oregano

1/8 tsp. of finely chopped garlic

¼ c sliced green scallions

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Brush the bottom and sides of a 9 inch springform pan with melted butter. Cut the phyllo sheets into 13 inch rounds. Ease one sheet into the pan off center so that the sheet extends about 3 inches up the side. Brush the top of the sheet with butter and repeat the phyllo and butter until the pan bottom and sides are covered. Make two slits with a knife in the center of the phyllo for the steam to escape. Bake the crust in the oven for 9-10 minutes or until lightly golden in color. Cool on a wire rack. Reduce the oven to 325 degrees.

Drain the artichokes reserving 2 Tbsp. of the marinade. Chop the artichokes and set them aside. Beat the creamy cheese in a large mixing bowl until smooth. Add the feta, oregano and garlic and beat well. Add the eggs and beat until they are just blended, over beating toughens them. Stir in the artichoke hearts, reserved marinade and green scallions. Pour into the crust and bake at 325 degrees for 35-40 minutes or until the center is soft set. Cool on a wire rack. Cover and chill at least 4 hours, preferably refrigerate overnight. Serve at room temperature.

A great topping for this cheesecake is to dice several Roma tomatoes, add one can of sliced black olives and a couple of canned artichoke hearts that have been finely chopped. Mix together 3 Tbsp. balsamic vinegar and 1 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil and salt and pepper to taste. Pour this over the tomatoes, olives and artichokes and allow it to sit for at least 30 minutes. Serve on the side or top each slice with the mixture before serving and garnish with a splayed artichoke heart.

Polenta Cheesecake with Pine Nut Sauce

Pastry Dough:

½ c. all purpose flour
2 Tbsp. sugar
¼ tsp. salt
2 ½ Tbsp. unsalted butter, cut into bits
2 Tbsp. ice water

Batter:

3 Tbsp. grappa or rum
½ c. golden raisins
1 ½ c. prepared polenta
16 ounces of creamy cheese softened
1 c. sugar
3 whole large eggs
1 large egg yolk
1 tsp. vanilla
½ tsp. cinnamon

Sauce:

1 c. sugar
½ c. water
½ cup pine nuts, toasted
1 tsp. vanilla

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. In an 8 inch springform pan stir together the flour, sugar and salt and with your fingertips, blend in the butter until the mixture resembles coarse cornmeal. Stir in the ice water until incorporated and press mixture evenly onto the bottom of the pan. Bake the pastry in the middle of the oven until golden, about 12 minutes.

In a small saucepan bring the grappa or rum and the raisins to a boil, stirring occasionally. Remove pan from heat. With the back of a spoon force the polenta through a coarse sieve into a bowl breaking up any lumps.

Stir in the creamy cheese until smooth and whisk in the remaining ingredients until combined well. Reduce the oven temperature to 350 degrees. Drain any liquid from the raisins. Pour the filling over the pastry and gently stir in the raisins. Bake the cheesecake in the middle of the oven for one hour, or until the edges are golden but the middle trembles slightly. Turn off the oven and cool the cheesecake in the oven 1 hour. Remove the cheesecake from the oven and chill, covered until cold. This cheesecake may be made 2 days ahead and chilled, covered.

In a heavy saucepan cook the sugar over moderate heat, without stirring, until it begins to melt. Continue to cook the sugar, stirring with a fork, until it is melted and swirls in the pan a deep caramel color. Add the water (be careful as the mixture will bubble up) and cook until the caramelized sugar dissolves. Cool the sauce slightly and stir in the pine nuts and vanilla until they are combined.

Serve the cheesecake drizzled with the sauce. Adding lustre dust or edible gold to this sauce gets a big 'wow' in appearance.

Gorgonzola Cheesecake

32 ounces of creamy cheese, softened
3 eggs
1 Tbsp. lemon juice
¼ tsp. salt
2 Tbsp. chopped fresh tarragon
1 tsp. chopped fresh dill
1 tsp. dried onion flakes
8 ounces gorgonzola cheese, crumbled

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a large bowl beat the creamy cheese until smooth. Add eggs, one at a time, blending between each one. Mix the lemon juice, salt, tarragon, dill and onion flakes into the cheese. With a rubber spatula, fold the gorgonzola cheese into the mixture.

Pour the batter into a parchment paper lined springform pan. Bake in the oven for 50-65 minutes or until the top is light brown and the center trembles slightly when shaken. Cool on a wire rack for 2 hours. Cover with plastic and refrigerate for at least 2 hours.

Serve warm or cold. If serving warm, cover with foil and place in a preheated 350 degree oven. Microwaving makes the cheesecake tough.

Grilled Portobello and Roasted Garlic Cheesecake

Crust:

1 9 inch disk of focaccia bread

Batter:

2 large Portobello mushrooms

24 ounces of creamy cheese

3 large eggs

16 ounces of sour cream

2 Tbsp. cornstarch

½ c. roasted garlic cloves

Topping:

1 c. balsamic vinegar

Toasted pine nuts

Chopped basil

Grated fresh parmesan cheese

Roasting garlic (method one) by removing the skins from 2-3 heads of garlic (enough to make a half cup). Wrap the cloves in tin foil and placing them in a 375 degree oven for 45 minutes. Remove them when golden brown and then smash them into a paste. Set aside. (Method two) Place an entire head of garlic that has had the top sliced off, in the center of a baking dish that has several inches of coarse ice cream salt in the bottom. Roast in the oven at 350 degrees until the garlic head is golden brown. Remove the cloves needed for the recipe and eat what's left spread on crusty peasant bread while you're baking this cheesecake 😊

Place the oven at 350 degrees and brush the focaccia bread with olive oil, season it and then bake until crisp. Leave the oven on and place the bread in the bottom of a 9 inch springform pan.

Slice the portobellas from top to bottom. Brush them with olive oil and seasoning and grill them. Place them around the inner rim of the springform pan.

Beat the creamy cheese with the salt until smooth, add the eggs one at a time and blend. In a separate bowl whisk together the sour cream and the cornstarch. Add to the cheese mixture and fold in well. Add salt and pepper to taste. Fold in the garlic and fill the pan to within $\frac{1}{4}$ inch from the top. Rap to remove any bubbles. Bake at 350 degrees until firm, about 25-30 minutes.

Drizzle with balsamic vinegar syrup and sprinkle with toasted pine nuts, chopped basil and grated parmesan.

Balsamic vinegar syrup: Place 1 cup of balsamic vinegar in a pot over high heat and cook until it reduces to the consistency of a fairly thick syrup, about 15 minutes.

RESOURCES

In this section I have compiled a list of sources for any unusual ingredients or things you might need to bake with. There is also a section on the rules for creating a perfect cheesecake...as stated by the 'experts' and a few helpful hints for things such as roasting chilies or making mozzarella cheese as a family activity.

As with any creative activity I encourage you to explore. Define your tastes and use that as a starting point for any number of varieties of cheesecake delectables. Making cheesecakes is a fun activity for families or lovers (anyone remember the eating scene in the movie Tom Jones?). Little fingers are very deft at patting the crust into the bottom of the pan. And licking cheesecake batter from a lovers' finger is most definitely an erotic activity. Last but not least...there is the pure ecstasy of eating those 'divine creations'.

Web Sites

www.guntheranderson.com/liqueurs.htm

This is an excellent site for recipes to make any number of liqueurs and cordials. If you make 'adult' cheesecakes (geared towards adult tastes) then making a variety of your favorites is a good idea. They keep for a long time.

www.dairyconnection.com/cultures.htm

A great source for hobbyist cheese making needs.

www.cheesemaking.com

New England Cheesemaking Supply Company is another source for cheesemaking supplies.

www.nativeseeds.org

Native Seeds is a nonprofit organization that practices seed conservation and community interaction in order to protect crop diversity and preserve the crop seeds that connect Native American to their lands. They are also a wonderful source for unusual chili powders, whole chilies, smoked chilies, mole' powders, blue/rose/white/yellow Native corn meals, prickly pear butter/syrup/nectar, and mesquite honey. You will find many more things to catch your interest too. They are great people with a very important cause.

www.misterart.com

A source for edible gold leaf.

www.goldleafcompany.com

A source for edible gold and silver leaf.

www.easyleafproducts.com

A source for edible gold and silver leaf.

www.kitchengifts.com

A source for a large variety of colors of lustre dust and edible glitter.

www.beryls.com

A source for pastry decorating supplies and kosher chocolate.

www.surlatable.com

A rather expensive place for baking utensils but they have some hard to find excellent bake ware and 'make your life easy' utensils.

www.cookingenthusiast.com

They have gourmet foods that makes me run wildly about, waving my hands and spouting off numerous cheesecake ideas. They have things such as, wild cherries, *real lavender honey* from France, fennel pollen, porcini mushroom flour, superb balsamic vinegars, blood orange marmalade, polenta with truffles, white and black truffle puree and truffled artichoke puree.

www.thewhitewhale.com/stonewall.htm

They make some of the most delectable gourmet foodstuffs. Things like, Maine wild blueberry jam, mixed nuts in clover honey, Vidalia onion fig sauce... Limited only by your cheesecake imagination.

The Easy Way to Roast and Peel Chilies

First... buy yourself a pair of rubber gloves that you designate for handling foods. Chilies have chili oils, which means if you get it on your hands and touch your eyes or face, it burns!! Handle the chilies with gloves. If you don't have a gas stove then you can use your ovens broiler. Take a whole fresh chili and hold it with metal tongs or lay them out on a baking sheet under a broiler and roast them until their outside skins are charred. Place them in a large Ziploc bag and seal it. Set them aside to cool. When they are cool (put your gloves on) remove them from the bag and pull the skins off. It will come off easily. Cut the tops from them and remove the seeds and ribs.

Cheese Making Supplies List

Digital thermometer
Large stainless steel pot (designated for cheese making)
Stainless steel slotted and regular large cooking spoons (cheesemaking only)
Liquid or dry rennet
Individual cheese culture packets
1 package of butter muslin
1 package of cheese muslin
Stainless steel colander (cheesemaking only)

This is a basic list. Unless you are going to get really into making cheeses then I doubt you will need anything more. Why designated cheese making supplies? Because cheese is made with friendly bacteria (like yogurt) and you don't want anything that could possibly contaminate your culture.

www.blueagavenectar.com

An online source for sugar substitutes in cheesecakes. This site also has the directions for cooking with agave nectar and some great recipes to boot!

www.leeners.com/cheesehow2.com

Another excellent source for cheese making supplies, cultures and recipes.

www.nmpinoncoffee.com

They have some great products. I have used their pinon coffee for making a really strong brew to flavor a cheesecake.

www.pinenut.com

An excellent source for pine nuts as well as other goodies.

www.chimayotogo.com/ctg_shop

Another one of those companies that are 'go wild with ideas for cheesecakes' goodies. They offer dried chilies, coffee, salsas, jams and jellies, bizcochito cookies (use them as a crust) and any number of other delicacies.

Ricki's Magic Mozzarella Cheese Recipe

Make sure the milk *is not the ultra-pasteurized*. Whole milk is best for this cheese.

You will need:

6-8 quart stainless steel pot
Stainless steel slotted spoon
2 quart microwave safe mixing bowl
Measuring spoons
A digital cooking thermometer

When you are making cheese, remember that you need to put all other food products away. Move all sponges, cloths, and dirty towels away from your work surface, wipe your sink and stove with soap and water. Finally use your antibacterial cleaner to wipe down all surfaces.

Crush $\frac{1}{4}$ rennet tablet and place it in $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cool unchlorinated water and set aside to use later.

Heat the milk to 90 degrees and add 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ -2 tsp. of citric acid. This brings the milk to a proper acid level to stretch well later. As the 90 degree temp is approached you will notice the milk beginning to curdle due to the acidity and the temperature.

When the milk reaches 90 degrees add your rennet (the prepared solution) to the milk and stir top to bottom motion for 30-60 seconds...then quit. Now turn the heat off and set it gently on a cool burner if you're using an electric stove. The temperature may continue to rise as high as 105 degrees.

Let the milk remain quiet for the next 3-5 minutes during which time it will form a curd. Cut the curd into a checkerboard pattern and then scoop with a slotted spoon into a heat proof bowl to be used in the microwave. If the curd is too soft then let it sit for a few more minutes. Now press the curd gently with your hand pouring off as much of the whey (liquid part) as possible. You can reserve the whey to use in cooking.

Microwave the curd on high for 1 minute. More whey will have run out of the curd. Drain off all whey as before. Quickly work the cheese with a spoon or using rubber gloves. *Microwave 2 more times for 35 seconds* each and repeat the kneading as in the last step. Drain all the whey off as you go.

Knead the cheese quickly as you would bread dough until it is smooth and shiny. Add salt if desired near the finish. At this point the cheese should be soft and pliable enough to stretch like taffy.

It is ready to eat when it cools. Form it into a ball and drop it into iced water to cool and refrigerate. You can wrap it in plastic wrap and store for several days. But this cheese is at its best when eaten immediately.

For photos of the process see:

<http://www.cheesemaking.com/includes/modules/jWallace/ChsPgs/1Mozz/Index.html>

RULES FOR PERFECT GODDESS CHEESECAKES

- All ingredients should be at room temperature.
- Mix well until combined, don't over beat.
- Loosen edges immediately after removing from oven.
- If you aren't using a water bath then place a shallow pan of water on the rack directly below the cheesecake to keep it moist.
- No opening the oven door while baking.
- A perfectly baked cheesecake will be puffed around the edges and when shaken, about an inch diameter in the center will tremble.
- Cool slowly on a wire rack out of drafts.
- Use a paddle attachment if at all possible as regular beaters incorporate too much air into the batter which can lead to cracks in the finished cake.
- If too much air is whipped into the batter the cake will be less creamy.
- Cheesecakes are basically steamed 'puddings'. Too much steam released too quickly causes the cake to crack.
- Deep cracks mean the egg white structure has collapsed and the cake will be wet. More like pudding.
- Always be sure the cheesecake is cooled to room temperature before refrigerating.
- Grease the sides of the pan so the surface will not crack when the cake begins to cool.

- Run a butter knife around the outside edge of the cake after removing it from the oven. It loosens the cake from the sides.
- Remove the springform pan bottom after the cheesecake has firmed in the refrigerator. Use two spatulas to remove the cheesecake to a platter. You may also use parchment paper in the bottom of the pan to assist in this.
- Cheesecakes taste best when at room temperature. Take it out about 30 minutes before serving.
- To freeze a cheesecake, securely wrap a firm cheesecake (at least 4 hours in the refrigerator). It will keep up to two months.
- Thaw frozen cheesecakes in the refrigerator overnight.

Water Bath

Wrap the outside of the springform pan with a double layer of heavy duty aluminum foil. Place the springform pan in a larger pan (usually I use a roasting pan or lasagna pan) and pour about one inch of very hot water into the larger pan. Make sure the larger pan is not taller than the springform or it will slow down the baking process.

Sugar/Splenda conversion is equal amounts. Unlike a number of other sugar substitutes it doesn't have chemical changes when exposed to heat.

To make a lower fat cheese for the cheesecake without sacrificing flavor, use lower percentage milk. I find the organic milks to give the cheese a nice flavor despite the lower fat content. I also increase the eggs in the cheesecake and use a stronger flavor such as chocolate or espresso.

My appreciation to all those taking the time to read and use the ideas and recipes in this book. I love to hear from people so don't be shy about sending me an email. I may not be quick in response as the farmstead and healing clients keep me pretty busy but eventually I will answer your emails.

Sincerely,

Dr. Darlene Two Trees-Cannon RN, ND

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