

Lemon Cheesecake with Meringue

Creamy melt in your mouth cheesecake with a sweet meringue cloud

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INGREDIENTS

- 320g digestive cookies (I use the whole wheat ones) or butter cookies
- 120g butter

- 3pkg (175g each) greek style philadelphia cream cheese or any other similar cream cheese
- 200g lemon curd (recipe available on www.inthekitchenwithelisa.com)
- 150g sugar
- zest of 1 organic lemon
- 2 eggs + 2 egg yolks
- 200g smetana or sour cream (20% fat)
- 60g flour

- 2 egg whites
- 100g sugar
- 25ml water
- 1tsp vanilla paste

- fresh mint and some lemon curd for decoration (optional)



DIRECTIONS

1. Crush the cookies in a blender or put them into a freezer bag and crush with a rolling pin. Make sure you don't have any big cookie pieces left in your crumb.
2. Melt the butter and allow it to cool.
3. Add the cookie crumb to the cooled butter and mix well until you have a smooth paste like consistency. You can test whether the cookie crumb is ready by taking a little of it into your hand and squeezing it together, if it forms a ball that sticks together it is ready, if it crumbles and falls apart add some more melted butter. (See video)
4. Cover a 20cm baking tin with parchment paper. Take about half of the cookie base and press it into the bottom of the baking tin so that you have a smooth base for the cheesecake. Then add the rest of the cookie crumb along the edges of the baking tin and press against the walls of the baking tin to form the sides of the cheesecake. (See video for detailed instructions)

5. Refrigerate the base for the time you are preparing the filling.
6. To make the filling make sure all ingredients are at room temperature. Add cream cheese, lemon curd, sugar and zest of one lemon to a large bowl and whisk with a hand mixer for one minute.
7. Separate egg yolks from egg whites of two of the eggs and store the egg whites in an airtight container in the refrigerator for later.
8. Add eggs to the cream cheese filling one at a time, mixing for at least one minute in between additions. You can then add both of the egg yolks at the same time.
9. Add the smetana/sour cream and mix for another minute.
10. Sift in the flour and mix again for one minute.
11. Take the base out of the refrigerator and pour the filling over the base. Smoothen the top and tap the cake tin onto the table a couple of times to release any air bubbles.
12. Turn the oven to 180°C bottom top heat. Then lower the temperature to 160°C just before putting the cake in the oven. Boil about 1.5 liters of water, put an oven proof casserole dish in the oven and pour the hot water into it. Then add an oven rack on top of it and place the cheese cake there.
13. Bake the cheesecake for 60-70 minutes, before turning off the oven check by shaking the cheesecake lightly, that the cheesecake has set from the sides. You want the sides to be set and not shaky at this point, but the middle to still be a little shaky. Then open the oven door just slightly (you can put two oven mittens in between the oven door) and allow the cheesecake to still be in the oven for about 30-40 minutes. Remove the cheesecake from the oven and allow to cool completely before cooling it in the fridge. Preferably cool the cheesecake in the fridge over night before serving.
14. Prepare the meringue topping for the cheesecake just before serving. Take the leftover egg whites from the previous day to room temperature and allow them to come to room temperature before you start with the meringue. Also take the cheesecake to room temperature when you start making the meringue.
15. Add sugar and water to a small pot, mix shortly so that the sugar is well combined with the water and start heating the sugar over high heat with a thermometer until it reaches 118°C. Once the sugar has reached about 50°C start whisking the egg whites in a standing mixer or with a hand mixer. You want to whisk the egg whites until soft peaks form. If the egg whites are ready before the sugar has reached 118°C, stop mixing and just leave them aside. Once sugar has reached 118°C remove it from heat and while mixing the egg whites on high speed start slowly pouring the sugar syrup into the egg whites from the side of the bowl. Continue whisking the meringue until the bowl feels cool to touch and until stiff peaks form. Then add vanilla paste and whisk shortly just until combined. (See video for detailed instructions)
16. Transfer the meringue into a piping bag and pipe the meringue on top of the cheesecake. You can alternatively just spread the meringue on top of the cheesecake. Then carefully torch the meringue to get a beautiful color on it. Be carefully not to burn the meringue. I suggest to start torching from a bit of a distance and once you see how it starts getting color you will get a feel for it. Allow the meringue to cool before you proceed to the next step.
17. Decorate with some lemon curd and fresh mint on top.

TIP. If you will have some leftover cheesecake, you can store it again in the refrigerator. Please note, that this will slightly change the structure of the meringue, but it will still taste good. Take it out from the refrigerator 30 minutes before serving as that is when the cheesecake is the creamiest.