

## Chef Debrina's "HUGE Hit" Pumpkin Cheesecake

### Ingredients for the Cookie Crust:

- 3 ounces unsalted butter, melted
- 5 ounces Sugar Cookies or my **FAV (secret) is to use Pecan Sandies** (or use graham crackers if you like) crushed into powder (I use my mini food processor)
- 3 tablespoons super fine granulated sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon dry ginger
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1/8 teaspoon sea salt
- For the pumpkin cheesecake
- 1 1/2 pounds Philly brand cream cheese
- 10 ounces (1 1/4 cups) super-fine granulated sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon dry ginger
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon cloves, freshly ground
- 1/2 teaspoon nutmeg, freshly grated
- 1/4 teaspoon allspice (powder)
- 1/2 teaspoon sea salt
- 1 15-ounce can of pumpkin (unsweetened)
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- 2 teaspoons dark rum (optional)
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice, freshly squeezed
- 5 eggs (large)
- 1 cup heavy cream

### To make the graham cracker crust:

Pre-heat the oven to 300 degrees and set the rack on the middle shelf.

Stir to combine graham crackers through salt in a bowl. Drizzle melted butter over ingredients and mix until evenly moistened. Spray bottom and interior sides of one (1) cake pan (9-inch-by-3-inch) or individual baking dishes with non-stick spray.

Scoop crust ingredients into pans and press down evenly until smooth. Use a flat bottom tool for best results (we use a baking mallet). Bake until fragrant and browned at the edges, about 15 minutes. Remove and cool on counter.

### To make the cheesecake:

**NOTE: I Prep ahead of time to remove some of the water content from the canned pumpkin:** Double fold plain white paper towels on a cookie sheet. Scoop pumpkin onto the towels and spread to height of 1/2 inch. Cover with single layer of paper towel; let sit for 30 minutes.

Take the now drained pumpkin and place in a bowl. Whisk to combine the pumpkin, lemon juice and vanilla extract in a medium bowl. Set aside.

#### Batter directions:

In a stand mixer with the flat beater, beat to smooth out the cream cheese on slow to medium speed for about 1 minute.

Combine sugar through salt in a medium bowl and whisk to blend.

Scrape cream cheese from sides, reduce mixer to lowest speed, add sugar mixture one third at a time. Allow each scoop to incorporate thoroughly before proceeding. To avoid aerating the batter, don't run mixer on higher speeds than low.

Add the pumpkin mixture 1/4 cup at a time, waiting between additions for the contents to combine with the base batter.

Add the eggs one at a time, waiting between additions for the contents to combine with the base batter.

Add the cream in a slow drizzle. Stop the mixer, scrape the sides and run on low for another 20 seconds.

(NOTE: I do not use spring form pans but high quality cake pans) Pour the batter into the prepared pans filling no more than 3/4 of the way. (The 9-inch-by-3-inch pan should hold one recipe with room to spare at the top. Higher pan helps protect from undue browning across the top.)

Place the filled cake pan in a roasting pan with high sides and place on the rack in the preheated oven. Pour enough steaming water between the cake pan and roasting pan to come about 2/3 up the side of the cake pan. Bake until the center is slightly wobbly when the pan is shaken, about 80 to 90 minutes.

Turn off heat, prop oven door ajar, and leave alone for 60 minutes.

Remove pan from water bath and cool on the counter until it's room temperature. Cover in plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 4 hours.

Remove from the cake pan by warming the bottom, either over an open flame for a few seconds or in a water bath. Place parchment, plastic wrap or wax paper over top of the cake before inverting to remove the cake. Quickly turn over to place on a cake plate.

Serve chilled with freshly whipped cream or ice cream of choice.