

Margherita Cheesecake

Source: Shade Montague (www.madebyshade.com)

Servings: 8 to 12 **Prep Time:** 45 m **Cook Time:** 4 h 12 m **Chill Time:** 8 h

EQUIPMENT:

- 9" springform pan
- Aluminum foil
- Saucepans
- Food processor / Blender
- Fine-mesh sieve
- Cheesecloth
- Large baking sheet / Roasting dish
- Thermometer
- Squeeze bottle

INGREDIENTS:

Brown Butter Basil Crust:

- Vegetable oil spray
- 8 tbsp butter, melted
- ½ cup basil, packed
- 5 oz butter crackers
- 2 oz flour
- 3 tbsp sugar
- ¼ tsp salt

Ricotta Cheesecake:

- 6 oz cherry tomatoes
- 2 tbsp sugar
- 1 tsp chili oil (Lao Gan Ma)
- 1 tsp orange juice
- ⅛ tsp salt

- 2 lbs whole milk ricotta, strained
- 16 oz cream cheese
- 11 oz sugar
- 3 tbsp orange juice
- 1 tsp salt

INSTRUCTIONS:

Brown Butter Basil Crust (10 minutes + 12 minutes baking)

Preheat oven to 350° F.

Grease a 9" springform pan with vegetable oil spray and tightly wrap the sides and bottom with two sheets of aluminum foil. Set aside.

In a small saucepan, heat the butter and basil over medium-low heat.

Simmer the basil in the butter, whisking frequently so it releases its oils, for a few minutes, until the butter browns.

Once browned, immediately transfer to a heat-safe container, and set aside.

In a food processor, combine the butter crackers, flour, sugar, and salt, pulsing until well combined.

With the food processor running, stream in the browned butter and basil, until the crust just starts to come together, about 30 seconds.

Transfer the crumbs to the springform pan, pressing them along the bottom and sides until evenly distributed.

Bake for 12 minutes, or until golden brown.

Transfer to the fridge to cool while you prepare the cheesecake filling.

- ½ tsp vanilla
- 6 eggs
- 2 egg yolks

Balsamic Caramel:

- ¼ cup brown sugar
- 2 tbsp balsamic vinegar
- ¼ cup heavy whipping cream
- 1 tbsp butter
- ⅛ tsp salt

Assembly:

- Basil leaves

Ricotta Cheesecake (20 minutes + 4 hours baking + 8 hours chilling)

Preheat the oven to 225° F.

In the bowl of a food processor, process the tomatoes, sugar, chili oil, orange juice, and salt until smooth, about 30 seconds.

Press through a fine mesh sieve into a small bowl and discard the solids. Set aside.

If needed, strain the ricotta in a cheesecloth and discard the liquid.

In the bowl of the food processor, combine the strained ricotta, cream cheese, sugar, orange juice, salt, and vanilla. Process until smooth.

Add the eggs and yolks, two at a time, and process until well combined.

Pour the cheesecake filling into the prepared crust. Run a fork across the top to remove any bubbles.

Carefully drop teaspoons of the tomato mixture on top and swirl in with a toothpick or knife.

Place the springform pan into a large baking sheet or roasting dish and put both in the oven.

Fill the baking sheet with boiling water until it goes about halfway up the sides of the springform pan.

Bake for 1 hour, then pop any bubbles that have risen to the top.

Return to the oven and bake until the internal temperature reaches at least 165° F and only the center of the cheesecake still jiggles when tapped, up to 3 more hours.

Remove from the oven and run a knife along the outside edge of the cake.

Let cool for 3 hours, then cover with plastic wrap and transfer to the fridge to cool overnight.

Once the cheesecake is cool, prepare the balsamic caramel.

Balsamic Caramel (10 minutes)

In a large saucepan, combine the brown sugar and balsamic vinegar over high heat until boiling.

Boil until a thermometer reads 220° F, then carefully add the cream (the mixture will bubble up and hiss so be careful).

Once the bubbles subside, whisk together until smooth.

Whisk in the butter and salt until fully combined and remove from heat to let cool.

Transfer to a squeeze bottle and set aside.

Assembly (5 minutes)

Remove the springform pan sides from the cheesecake and set the cheesecake on your serving plate.

Drizzle the caramel sauce on top of the cheesecake and decorate with fresh basil leaves.

Serve immediately. Leftovers may be stored, covered, in the fridge for up to a week.

Enjoy!