

A Divinely Decadent Chocolate Cheesecake

1 pound chocolate cookies
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
10 tablespoons melted butter (1 stick + 2 T.)
1 cup sugar
3 packages (8 oz. each) cream cheese, softened
4 eggs
16 oz. semisweet chocolate**, melted over *very low* heat and cooled
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
2 cups sour cream (a 16 oz. container)

1. Crush cookies to a fine, even crumb using an electric blender or food processor (You can also put the cookies in a plastic bag and crush them with a rolling pin.). You should have about 2 cups.
2. Turn crumbs into a medium-size bowl and mix with cinnamon. Stir in 2 tablespoons of the melted butter. Press crumbs firmly onto the bottom and side of a 10-inch springform pan. Place in the refrigerator to chill while making the filling.
3. Preheat oven to 350° F.
4. Beat sugar and cream cheese together in a large bowl until light and fluffy. Beat in eggs one at a time. Add melted chocolate, vanilla, cocoa, and sour cream, beating constantly as you do so. Add remaining 8 tablespoons melted butter and blend thoroughly.
5. Bake on the lower oven rack for 45 or 50 minutes, or until the edge is completely set. The center of the cake will not appear to be set, but it will firm as the cake cools.
6. Cool cake until warm on a wire rack, then cover and refrigerate (still in the pan) for at least several hours or overnight before serving.
7. Remove cake from pan. To remove from pan, remove and lift off sides of springform pan. Cover a plate tightly with plastic wrap, and place, plastic wrap side down, over top of cheesecake. Invert, lift off bottom of pan, place serving plate over bottom of cheesecake, invert again, and lift off plate with plastic wrap.
8. Garnish as desired. I suggest lightly sweetened whipped cream, and I like to top it with chocolate curls.

Makes 16-20 servings.

Notes: This cake keeps very well in the refrigerator for at least a week. Just be sure to keep it covered, and also be sure to chill the cake right away after serving from it.

You can melt the chocolate in a microwave oven, but be careful not to overheat it. A double boiler also works well. Cover with plastic wrap, simmer for 12-15 minutes, then stir until smooth.

I always use reduced fat (NOT fat-free) cream cheese and sour cream. I've made it this way many times, as well as as with the "full strength" kind, and the results are indistinguishable, so why add the extra fat?

**For the chocolate, I use Callebaut, either bittersweet or semisweet.