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New York Cheesecake
Cherry Cheesecake Ice Cream on Shortcrust Cookies
Makes 12 sandwiches

Close your eyes, picture yourself at a booth in your favorite New York diner, and you just might believe this sandwich is an icy-cold slice of cheesecake. Smooth, sweet, and creamy, with a touch of lemon, it's an iconic taste. You can argue 'til the cows come home about Junior's versus Lindy's, graham cracker versus shortcrust, sour cream topping or not. One thing you won't have to worry about: the top of your cheesecake cracking in the oven.

You can use reduced-fat cream cheese (Neufchâtel) and sour cream in this recipe, but stay away from the nonfat versions. For strawberry cheesecake ice cream, substitute strawberries for the cherries in the Cherry Swirl mix-in.

Cherry Cheesecake Ice Cream

1-1/4 cups (300 ml) milk
1/2 cup (100 g) granulated sugar
2 tablespoons inverted sugar syrup, golden syrup, or light agave nectar
1 tablespoon tapioca starch
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
6 ounces (168 g) cream cheese, at room temperature
1/3 cup (80 ml) sour cream, at room temperature
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
1 teaspoon packed finely grated lemon zest
1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice
1 recipe Cherry Swirl (see below)

Whisk 1/2 cup (120 ml) of the milk with the sugar, syrup, tapioca, and salt in a medium saucepan until no lumps remain. Stir in the remaining 3/4 cup (180 ml) milk. Heat the mixture over medium-high heat, stirring with a heatproof spatula, until it begins to steam and slightly bubble at the edges. Adjust to a simmer and cook, stirring constantly, until the mixture thickens to the consistency of a cream sauce, about 90 seconds longer; do not fully boil. Set aside.

Mix the cream cheese in a bowl with a handheld mixer until completely smooth. Add the sour cream, vanilla, lemon zest, and lemon juice and mix until smooth. Briefly mix in the thickened milk, just enough to combine everything evenly. (Alternatively, use a food processor.)

Transfer the mixture to a metal bowl set over a larger bowl of ice and water. Stir occasionally until the mixture is cool, taking care not to slosh water into the bowl. Cover and refrigerate until very cold, at least 2 hours. Transfer the bowl to the freezer for the last half hour before spinning it.

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Freeze the mixture in an ice cream maker according to the manufacturer's directions. When it is ready, transfer the ice cream to a chilled container, adding in the swirl as you go. Cover and freeze until firm, at least 6 hours or overnight.

Cherry Swirl

Makes about 1 cup (240 ml)

Use with either sweet or tart cherries, but with the latter, increase the sugar by 2 tablespoons or to taste. (I love 'em tart!)

2 teaspoons tapioca starch
2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
2 cups (300 g) pitted sweet cherries, fresh or frozen and thawed
2 tablespoons granulated sugar
Pinch of salt

Stir the tapioca and lemon juice in a small bowl to dissolve the tapioca; set near the stove.

Stir the cherries, sugar, and salt in a medium nonreactive saucepan over medium heat until the cherries burst, exude their juices, and soften, about 5 minutes. Stir the lemon juice mixture, then scrape into the cherries and cook, stirring constantly, until the mixture thickens, about 90 seconds. Taste and add more sugar or lemon juice if you wish.

Use an immersion blender or food processor to puree the mixture, leaving it a little bit chunky. (Beware: Cherries stain!)

Let cool to room temperature, then cover and refrigerate until cold.

Shortcrust Cookies

1 cup (132 g) all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
1/2 cup (1 stick/113 g) unsalted butter, softened
3/4 cup (150 g) granulated sugar
1/2 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest
1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
2 tablespoons turbinado or coarse sugar, for sprinkling

Preheat the oven to 325°F (165°C) with racks in the upper and lower thirds of the oven. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper or silicone baking mats.

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Whisk together the flour, baking powder, and salt in a small bowl. Set aside.

Beat the butter and sugar in a medium bowl with a handheld electric mixer until creamy. (Alternatively use a wooden spoon.) Add the lemon zest and vanilla. Mix in the flour mixture just until well combined. (If using a mixer, it may be easier to finish the mixing by hand.)

Divide the dough into 24 pieces, rolling each between your palms into a smooth ball. Dunk one side of each ball in turbinado sugar and space them evenly on the baking sheets, sugar-side up. Use a flat-bottom drinking glass to flatten each ball to 1/4-inch (6-mm) thickness. (Moisten the glass bottom or spray it with nonstick pan spray if the dough sticks.)

Bake until the cookies are light golden around the edges, 12 to 14 minutes, rotating the pans top to bottom and front to back halfway through baking. Let the cookies cool on the sheets for 5 minutes, then slide the cookies on their liners to wire racks to cool completely.

SANDWICH!

Form sandwiches using Method #1:

1. Pair the cookies with like-size mates.
2. Place a 1/4-cup (60 ml) scoop of ice cream (1/3 cup / 80 ml) for large cookies, ice cream quantity permitting) between the bottoms of each cookie pair. For the neatest scoops, use a measuring cup with straight sides, about the diameter of the cookies, to measure out the ice cream. Fill the measure according to the recipe, and use a knife or offset spatula to release the scoop onto a cookie bottom.
3. Press gently to squeeze the ice cream slightly beyond the edge of the cookies. If desired, use a small offset spatula or the flat side of a dinner knife to smooth the ice cream flush with the edge.

Take it Easy

Substitute store-bought sugar or butter cookies.

Dress It Up

Roll the sides of the sandwiches in chopped dried cherries.