

# Ultimate Peanut Butter Cheesecake

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## Recipe Snapshot

**Taste:** Loaded with nutty peanut flavor balancing cheesecake's sweet tang.

**Texture:** Crunchy crust, velvety filling, rich fudgy topping.

**Ease:** Weekend baking project — very doable with the tips below.

**Pros:** Perfect for peanut butter lovers.

**Cons:** None noted.

**Great for:** Family dinners, Friendsgiving, holiday parties.

**Method:** Baked cheesecake with water bath.

**Components:** Peanut-graham crust; peanut butter cheesecake filling; peanut butter ganache topping.

## Overview

This is truly the *Ultimate Peanut Butter Cheesecake*: peanuts in the crust, peanut butter in the filling, and a luscious peanut butter ganache topping for absolute nutty decadence.

## Reader Love

*“Tessa, I am to the point where I just won't make a cheesecake recipe that isn't yours. This peanut butter cheesecake is a dream... total perfection!! Thank you!”* — Mary M

## Ingredients Overview

### Crust

- Graham cracker and peanut crumb base (crunchy foundation).
- Melted butter to bind.

### Filling

- High-quality, full-fat brick cream cheese (fully softened).
- Granulated sugar.
- Sour cream (room temperature).
- Conventional creamy peanut butter (see note below).
- Eggs (room temperature).
- Vanilla extract.

### Topping

- Peanut butter ganache (peanut butter gently combined with hot cream; prepare to desired consistency).

#### Sprinkle of Science: Peanut Butter Choice

Use **conventional creamy peanut butter**. It typically contains a stabilizing oil that keeps it emulsified. Natural peanut butter can separate; if using it, mix *extremely well* so there are no dry bits or oily pockets.

## Equipment

Springform pan; roasting pan (for the water bath); wide heavy-duty aluminum foil (wrap pan at least 3 times) or an oven bag; electric mixer (stand or hand); kettle for boiling water; instant-read thermometer; thin knife; metal pie server; sharp chef's knife.

## Method Overview

### 1) Prepare the pan and crust

- Wrap the springform pan base and sides in wide heavy-duty foil (3 layers) to protect from the water bath.
- Press the graham-peanut crust firmly into the pan (base; sides optional). Chill while making the filling.

### 2) Make the filling

- Beat softened cream cheese **thoroughly** until completely smooth before adding anything else.
- Add sugar, sour cream, and peanut butter; beat smooth, scraping bowl and beater *often*.
- Add eggs **last** and mix just until combined (avoid overbeating at this stage).

### 3) Set up the water bath

- Place the foil-wrapped springform pan into a larger roasting pan on the oven rack.
- Carefully pour boiling water into the roasting pan until it reaches halfway up the sides of the springform pan.

### 4) Bake gently

- Bake until the top looks set/dry but the *center still jiggles gently*.
- Internal temperature at the center should read about **150°F**.

### 5) Cool slowly

- Turn the oven off; crack the door and let the cheesecake cool gradually in the warm oven.

- Immediately after removing from the oven, run a thin knife around the edge to help prevent cracks as it cools.
- Cool to room temperature, then chill completely in the refrigerator until fully set.

## 6) Finish with ganache & slice cleanly

- Pour the peanut butter ganache over the chilled cheesecake; let it set.
- For clean slices: unlatch and remove the springform ring, warm a sharp knife under hot water, wipe dry, and clean between cuts. Slide a metal server under the crust to lift slices without crumbling.

## Why Use a Water Bath?

A water bath provides a gentle, even heat that:

- Helps prevent cracks and sunken centers.
- Ensures an ultra-smooth, even texture.
- Keeps edges from overbaking before the center is done.

## Preventing Cracks: Three Common Causes

**Overbeating** Beat cream cheese, sugar, sour cream, and peanut butter very well, scraping often. Once eggs are added, **mix only until combined**.

**Overcooking** Residual heat continues cooking after the oven is off. Stop when the center still wobbles and the top looks dry.

**Rapid temperature change** Avoid opening the oven frequently. Cool gradually in the turned-off oven with the door cracked. Run a thin knife around the edge right after baking.

## Doneness Cues

Stop baking when the cheesecake is dry on top but still gently wobbly in the very center. The center should register about **150°F**. It will finish setting as it cools and chills.

## Serving Tips

If time allows, rest at room temperature for about 30 minutes before serving for best texture and flavor.

## Storage

Loosely cover and refrigerate for up to **5 days**. Note: the crust will gradually lose some crunch over time.

## Freezing

Cheesecake freezes beautifully:

1. Freeze the whole cake or individual slices on a baking sheet until firm.
2. Wrap in plastic wrap and place in a freezer bag; freeze up to **2 months**.
3. Thaw a whole cake overnight in the fridge. Individual slices can thaw overnight in the fridge or at room temperature for about 30 minutes.

Add exact quantities, oven temperature, and timings where you store those details.