



Martina McBride's Gingersnap-pumpkin cheese cake

INGREDIENTS:

Serves 10 to 12

This makes a nine-inch cheesecake and it is very rich on top of an already rich meal, so slice it thinly, knowing that you will have about half the cheesecake left over. Wrap the remaining cheesecake tightly and refrigerate to enjoy another night.

2 cups crushed gingersnap cookies (30 to 40 cookies), plus extra for garnish

1/4 cup packed light brown sugar

6 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted

3 8-ounce packages of cream cheese, softened

1 cup granulated sugar

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1/2 teaspoon ground allspice

1/2 teaspoon ground ginger

1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg

3 large eggs

2 tablespoons heavy cream

2 teaspoons vanilla extract

1 15-ounce can pure pumpkin puree (not pumpkin pie filling)

1 cup heavy cream, whipped, or Chantilly cream (see Note), optional

Crushed toffee bar, such as Heath, optional

DIRECTIONS:

1. Prepare a 9-inch springform pan by tracing it onto a sheet of parchment paper. Lightly grease the bottom of the pan. Cut out the round of parchment and place it in the greased pan and then lightly grease the paper (a little trick I learned from Martha).

2. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Place the crushed gingersnaps and brown sugar in a food processor and process until finely chopped. Add the melted butter and process until thoroughly combined. Press the mixture into the bottom and up the sides of the springform pan. Chill for 10 to 20 minutes.

3. Beat the cream cheese and granulated sugar in a medium bowl with an electric mixer until light and fluffy. Add the cinnamon, allspice, ginger, and nutmeg and mix until combined. Add the eggs, one at a time, mixing just until the yolk disappears. Add the cream, vanilla, and pumpkin puree, mixing to just combine.

4. Remove the crust from the refrigerator. Pour the cheesecake batter into the prepared crust. Bake 1 hour and 15 minutes, or until the center is almost set. Run a sharp knife around the edge of the cheesecake to help prevent it from cracking as it cools. Let the cheesecake cool at least 30 minutes. Cover and chill in the

refrigerator overnight.

5. To serve, remove the cheesecake from the pan and transfer it to a serving plate. Slice into 10 to 12 wedges and top each with a dollop of whipped cream and a sprinkle of crushed gingersnaps or finely crushed toffee bar.

Tip: If you don't have all the spices on hand and must go to the store, purchase a single jar of pumpkin pie spice and use 2¼ teaspoons in place of the ground spices called for here.

Note: To make 2 cups of Chantilly cream, whip 1 cup of cold heavy cream with 1 tablespoon of confectioners' sugar and ½ teaspoon of vanilla extract.