

The Hairy Bikers' Best of British



Caramel Pecan Cheesecake

Serves 8-10

For the base

- ◆ 100g pecan nuts
- ◆ 150g milk chocolate digestive biscuits, roughly broken
- ◆ 75g butter

For the filling

- ◆ 275g caster sugar
- ◆ 6 tbsp cold water
- ◆ 150g white chocolate, broken into squares
- ◆ 600g full fat soft cheese (such as Philadelphia)
- ◆ 150ml double cream
- ◆ 2 large egg yolks
- ◆ 4 large eggs

For the topping

- ◆ 300ml double cream

FOOD FACTS

- ◆ Contrary to popular belief, cane sugar originated in Asia and not the West Indies. In 1493, the explorer Christopher Columbus took sugar cane to the New World, where it flourished in the hot sunshine and heavy rainfall.
- ◆ Sugar was regarded as a spice in Medieval Europe because it was costly and scarce and reached Britain via spice traders.
- ◆ The pecan nut is native to southern states of the USA, where there are now more than 500 named varieties. Related to the walnut, its kernel looks similar but is oilier and has a milder flavour. Its shell is smooth.

Historical facts provided by Monica Askay,
Cook and Food Historian



- ① Put the pecan nuts in a food processor and blitz on the pulse setting until roughly chopped. Tip into a bowl. Add the biscuits to the processor and blitz into chunky crumbs, making sure they don't go too fine as you want the base to have a crunchy texture. Add to the nuts. Melt the butter in a small pan and pour onto the pecans and biscuits. Stir until thoroughly combined.
- ② Tip the crumb mixture into a lightly oiled 23cm spring-clip cake tin. Spread evenly over the base and press down lightly using your fingertips or the back of a spoon. Place the tin in the fridge and leave the base to set until the filling is made.
- ③ To make the filling, put 200g of the caster sugar in a saucepan with the cold water and heat gently until the sugar dissolves, stirring occasionally. Line two large baking trays with baking parchment. Bring the liquid to the boil over a medium high heat and cook for 8-10 minutes without stirring until the sugar syrup turns golden brown. Swish the caramel around the pan gently as it bubbles.
- ④ As soon as the caramel is rich and golden remove from the heat and leave to stand for a few seconds until it begins to cool and thicken a little. (It will continue browning for a short while.) Using a large, metal spoon, drizzle a little caramel at a time all over the lined baking trays. Leave to cool and set. At no point be tempted to touch or taste the caramel as it is extremely hot. If the caramel hardens too much for you to drizzle, simply warm it up for a few seconds by putting the pan back on the hob.
- ⑤ Put the chocolate in a heatproof bowl and melt over a pan of simmering water until almost melted, without stirring. Take off the heat, stir for a few seconds until smooth. Leave to cool for about 20 minutes, but do not allow to set. Preheat oven to 180C/fan oven 160C/ Gas 4. Boil a kettle of water.
- ⑥ Break off 125g of the hardened caramel (weigh it on your scales as you break it, it's probably about one tray's worth). Put into a food processor and whizz into crumbs. This will help give the cheesecake a delicious caramel flavour. Keep the rest on the tray, lightly covered and in a cool place. Do not put in the fridge or the moisture will cause the caramel to soften.
- ⑦ Add the cheese, cream, remaining 75g of sugar, egg yolks and eggs to the food processor and blend on the pulse setting until only just combined. Add the cooled chocolate and blend until just mixed. Don't worry if there are a few small pieces of chocolate in the mixture as these will melt as the filling cooks. Pour the cheesecake filling onto the chilled base.
- ⑧ Put a large piece of foil (extra-wide foil if possible) on the work surface, or criss-cross two pieces if using standard foil. Place the cake tin in the centre of the foil and bring up the sides to create a foil bowl around the cheesecake. The pudding is going to be baked in a bain-marie and the foil will prevent the water finding its way into the cake tin and making the base soggy, while the steamy water will gently cook the cheesecake filling.
- ⑨ Place in a medium-sized roasting tin and add enough just-boiled water to rise roughly 2cm up the sides of the tin. Carefully place the roasting tin in the centre of the oven and bake for 45-50 minutes. The cheesecake is ready when it is lightly browned and almost, but not fully, set. If you jiggle the tin, you should see the filling ripple very slightly under the surface in the centre.
- ⑩ Once the cheesecake is ready, turn off the oven and leave the cake inside for a further hour. This will help to prevent the surface cracking as it cools. Lift the tin from the water and peel off the foil. Cover with cling film and put the cheesecake in the fridge. Chill for at least 3 hours (and up to overnight) before serving.
- ⑪ To serve, run a round tipped knife around the cheesecake and carefully release the tin. Slide the cake on to a flat serving plate or cake stand, using a palette knife to help you. Whip the cream until soft peaks form and spoon in big fluffy clouds over the cheesecake. Break the reserved caramel into shards and scatter on top. Serve cut into wedges.

FOOD FACTS

- ◆ Our modern cheesecakes have their roots in Medieval and Tudor cheese tarts flavoured with spices and flower petals. The first English written recipe, Tart de Bry flavoured with saffron, is from the 14th century.

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