

Recipe from FormerChef.com

Vanilla Bean Cheesecake with Chocolate Crust and Salted Caramel

Crust-

[1 recipe chocolate wafers from smitten kitchen](#)

(Or 2-3 boxes Nabisco chocolate wafers. I'm not exactly sure how many boxes you need. Start with 2 and work up from there.)

4 cups chocolate cookie crumbs
1/2 cup flour
4 oz melted butter

(instructions on making the crust below)

Filling:

2 lbs cream cheese, softened
1 cup sugar
4 eggs
1 vanilla bean
1/4 cup milk

Topping:

1 cup sour cream
1 Tbsp sugar
1/2 tsp vanilla

Salted Caramel:

1 cup sugar
2 Tbsp

1 cup cream
2 oz butter
1 tsp [fleur de sel](#) (plus 2 tsp more for optional garnish)

Bake the cookies following Smitten Kitchen's recipe or buy them. If you choose to bake them, make sure you roll out the dough as thin and evenly as possible before baking. I divided the batch in half and then rolled the dough out to 1/4 inch thick onto a silpat with plastic wrap on top (this keeps the dough from sticking to the rolling pin). The cookies can be baked the day before. Break them into pieces and store covered.

Put the cookies or cookie pieces into a food processor and pulse until they are fine crumbs. Remove the crumbs from the bowl, measure out 4 cups of crumbs, and put them back into the food processor. Add the flour and pulse to combine. Add the melted butter and pulse until the cookie crumbs have the consistency of wet sand.

Recipe from FormerChef.com

Press about 2 cups the crust into the bottom of the [9" springform pan](#) and then the rest up the sides of the pan to the top edge. You should use all of the crust mix.

Preheat oven to 325 degrees

Filling:

Put the milk in a small pot. Split open the vanilla bean and scrape out the seeds inside. Put both into the pot with the milk. Heat the milk until it's hot, but not boiling. Turn off the heat and let the vanilla and milk steep for 15 minutes. Remove the vanilla pod and if it's softened more by being in the milk, you may be able to scrape out more seeds. If so, whisk them into the milk.

For the filling, put the cream cheese into a mixing bowl (I use a [KitchenAid stand mixer](#), but you can use a hand mixer if you have one). Add in the sugar and beat until combined with the cream cheese and very smooth. Crack the eggs into a separate bowl, and with the mixer on, slowly beat in the eggs one at a time. Stop the mixer and scrape down the sides with a spatula. Turn it on again and add in the milk with the vanilla beans, beat until it's all combined and there are no lumps.

Pour the filling into the pan with the crust. Place the pan on a cookie sheet lined with foil (sometimes the butter in the crust melts and runs from the pan).

Bake for 55 min-1 hour at 325 degrees until set but still soft and jiggly in the center.

While the cheesecake is cooking, mix together the sour cream, sugar and vanilla. When the cheesecake is done, remove from the oven for 10 minutes, but leave the oven on. After 10 min, spread the sour cream topping on the cheesecake and return to the oven for 10 more minutes. Remove, place on a cooling rack and allow to cool for 1 hour. Refrigerate before serving for at least 4 hours. The cheesecake can be made up to two days in advance.

Caramel topping:

In a small, heavy bottomed pot, melt the sugar with water. Cook over high heat until deep amber in color. Remove from heat, and carefully whisk in the cream (it will bubble up). Whisk in the butter, and if the caramel has cooled too much to melt the butter, return to a low heat and whisk until it is all incorporated. Whisk in the 1 tsp fleur de sel.

Allow the caramel to cool and pour over the top of the baked and cooled cheesecake. Garnish the top with flakes of fleur de sel.

Note; If you are making the cheesecake in advance, I recommend you save the salt garnish until right before serving because if refrigerated, the moisture in the refrigerator will melt the salt.