

Champion cheesecake has a berry pink blush

By Joyce Rosencrans
Post food editor

This cheesecake was named an Ohio State Fair Best of Show in 2005.

Cheesecake purists love Lindy's cheesecake, often served plain, without a fruit sauce or baked-on sour cream topping. Lindy's New York-style cheesecake is tall, rich and creamy-moist. But this chocolate-raspberry cheesecake recipe is much more simple to make, if not less expensive because one must buy a bag of frozen red raspberries. But aren't they always worth the price for their health benefits, at least for those who love 'em?

The Ohio State Fair winning recipe is a winner for Valentine's Day, given the cheesecake's combination of chocolate crumb crust and double-decker effect, topping a chocolate cream cheese mixture with another laced with sweetened red raspberries. Only the top layer turns out pink, or just slightly rippled red, depending on how well you beat the berries into the cheesecake batter.



This is Mary Lou Richard's recipe. The Findlay, Ohio, native won the 2005 Ohio State Fair's Best of Show for her cheesecake, which calls for just three 8-ounce packages of cream cheese. The batter is guaranteed to be velvety smooth because the recipe also calls for a can of sweetened condensed milk, not to be confused with evaporated milk.

Lindy's cheesecakes, by contrast, are a boatload of calories, calling for five 8-ounce packages of cream cheese, and these bountiful cheesecakes are sized for a crowd.

To get the best results from a really big cheesecake recipe - requiring a long stay in the oven to bake through to the center - is a bain marie. This French method for adding moisture to the oven is accomplished by placing the springform pan holding cheesecake batter into a larger, shallow pan holding hot water deep enough to come about halfway up the sides of the springform pan. As the cheesecake bakes in a moderate oven with a bain marie, the outer edges don't overheat and dry out. The steam generated in the oven also helps prevent a cheesecake from cracking on top.

Of course, a cheesecake with a crack is no big calamity (if it's not overbaked and dry, that is) once the cake is chilled overnight and cut into wedges and smothered with fruit or fruit sauce.

Always avoid baking a cheesecake overlong. It's actually done before the center of the mixture is completely firm and set.

Remove a cheesecake from the oven (with or without a bain marie) when a cake tester or wooden pick inserted near, but not at, the center comes out clean. At that point, the sides will be higher than the center and just starting to brown. Baking longer will likely result in cracking.

The heat trapped inside the cheesecake will continue to cook the soft center as the cheesecake cools.

A secret to better texture and easier slicing is to cool, then cover and thoroughly chill a cheesecake at least eight hours or overnight. It's tempting to make and bake a cheesecake, then cut it right away, using a knife dipped into hot water before each cut. But waiting for the Big Chill overnight to have its effect on a cheesecake is the wiser course.

Lindy's Restaurant in New York City was famous for its cheesecake from the early 1930s to the 1950s, when owner Leo Lindermann passed away. He was the only person, supposedly, who knew the Lindy's recipe, but many similar versions have been passed around ever since, and Lindy's is still open and still serves cheesecake.

The smaller recipe for this Chocolate Raspberry Cheesecake from the Ohio State Fair competition is one of several featured in a recipe booklet, "Champion Cheesecakes: Recipes For Every Season," produced by the American Dairy Association & Dairy Council Mideast. The booklet is available by sending name, address and \$1 for shipping/handling to the Ohio Poultry Association, Cheesecake book, 5930 Sharon Woods Blvd., Columbus, OH 43229. Or it can be downloaded from the Ohio Poultry Association's Web site, along with the Buckeye cheesecake and others at www.ohiopoultry.org.

The poultry producers of Ohio are engaged with this recipe because the fair-winner calls for four eggs.

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