

PUMPKIN CHEESECAKE

with Caramel Sauce and Candied Pumpkin Seeds

This a wonderful way of proving, if proof were needed, that pumpkin deserves its revered place on our holiday tables. Mellow-er than pumpkin pie and spicier than your average cheesecake, this cake is the best of both dessert worlds and gives the desirable illusion of being light as air and soft as silk. We roast our own pumpkin, but canned is a venerable substitute. In a perfect world, home-baked gingersnaps would form the perfect crust. This dessert is so popular with the staff and our purveyors that swapping cakes for fish and other services is not at all unusual.

CRUST

- 3 cups ground gingersnap crumbs
- 1/2 cup sweet, unsalted butter, melted

FILLING

- 8 ounces nonstabilized cream cheese (cream cheese without gelatin), at room temperature
- 4 ounces mascarpone cheese
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1 egg
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/8 teaspoon ground mace
- 1 teaspoon freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/2 cup fresh or canned pumpkin purée

CANDIED PUMPKIN SEEDS

- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- Pinch of freshly ground black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon ground ginger
- 2 cups shelled green (raw) pumpkin seeds (also known as pepitas)
- 3 tablespoons water

CARAMEL SAUCE

- 1/4 cup water
- 2 cups sugar
- 3/4 cup heavy whipping cream

TO PREPARE THE CRUST:

Mix together the gingersnap crumbs and butter. Press into the bottom of a 10-inch spring-form pan and set aside.

TO PREPARE THE FILLING:

Preheat the oven to 325°. Beat the cream cheese in the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment. Add the mascarpone and mix well. Add the sugar and egg and mix well. Add the spices, lemon juice, and vanilla. Be sure to scrape the bottom of the mixing bowl to combine thoroughly. Beat in the pumpkin and pour the mixture into the prepared pan. Bake for 30 minutes. The cake should rise a little around the edge and in the center. Let cool in the pan on a rack, and then refrigerate for 1 to 2 hours, or until firm.

TO CANDY THE PUMPKIN SEEDS:

Preheat the oven to 350°. Mix the sugar and spices. Wet the seeds with the water. Add the sugar and spices and mix well. Pour onto a parchment-lined baking sheet and bake for 15 to 20 minutes. The sugar will stick to the seeds and the seeds will puff a little. Let cool.

TO PREPARE THE SAUCE:

Combine the water and sugar in a heavy-bottomed saucepan. Bring to a boil over high heat and continue cooking for 15 to 20 minutes, or until the sugar darkens to the color of dark tea. Remove from the heat and mix in the cream, a little at a time. Be extremely careful not to burn yourself with the hot sugar. Set aside.

TO SERVE:

Slice the cake and top with the candied pumpkin seeds and caramel sauce.

MAKES ONE 10-INCH CAKE

