

Recipes for How to Make Israeli Cheesecake — American Cheesecake's Lighter Cousin

The Noshers' Online Jewish Food Festival

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Israeli cheesecake

Israeli cheesecake is a light and just a bit tart thanks to the specific cheese that's used. The original recipe calls for Israeli "white cheese," which is actually a German cheese called quark. The cheese is very light, a little tart, and results in a cake that's just wonderful. These days, quark is usually available at Whole Foods and at many kosher supermarkets.

Note: If you cannot get it quark, just replace it with a combination of cream cheese, labneh and Icelandic yogurt, such as Skyr. Labneh and Skyr are available at most specialty supermarkets, like Whole Foods and Trader Joe's, as well as some chain supermarkets. The results are surprisingly similar.

SERVES 12

Ingredients

- 8 oz. shortbread cookies or tea biscuits like [these](#)
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 3 lbs. quark cheese (or 1 lb. cream cheese, 1 lb. Icelandic yogurt and 1 lb. labneh, see note above*) at room temperature
- 1 cup sugar
- 8 tablespoons instant vanilla pudding mix

- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- Zest of one lemon
- 1 lb. sour cream
- ¼ cup powdered sugar

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 300 degrees. Grease a 9-inch spring-form pan.
2. If you're using quark cheese, especially if it's not an Israeli brand, it's better to strain the cheese and let some of the water run out. To do that, pour the cheese into a fine sieve, or a few layers of cheesecloth, and let stand for an hour or until it's a bit thicker.
3. Add the cookies to a food processor and pulse until fine. With the food processor still running, add the melted butter. Flatten the finished cookie mix into the bottom and sides of the pan.
4. For the filling, mix the cream cheese in the bowl of a food processor until smooth. Transfer to a stand mixer, ideally fitted with a whip attachment. Add labneh and yogurt and mix briefly. (If you're using quark, simply put it all in the bowl of a stand mixer.)
5. Add sugar and instant pudding and mix to combine. Make sure the mixture is smooth with no pudding powder pockets. Add eggs and lemon zest and mix briefly. Stop the mixer, scrape the sides with a spatula, then mix just a little more to combine. You do not want to whip the eggs.
6. Pour the cheese mixture into the pan and bake for 1 hour.
7. While the cake is in the oven, mix the sour cream and powdered sugar in a medium bowl.
8. After one hour, take the cake out of the oven and use an icing spatula to very gently spread the sour cream on top. Start from the sides of the cake and slowly

work towards the center. The center of the cake will be very soft at this point so be careful not to break it.

9. Return the cake to the oven for another 10 minutes. At this point the center of the cake will still be very shaky and this is fine. Turn the oven off, place a folded towel to keep the oven door slightly open, and leave the cake to cool down in the oven for another couple of hours. Cover pan with aluminum foil and refrigerate overnight before serving.

Israeli tiramisu

One of Israel's favorite cakes is this simple recipe that combines tea biscuit cookies, vanilla pudding and cheese — something that feels like it would fit in a children's cookbook. Once you try it, though, you'll understand why it is so popular.

Notes: Icelandic yogurt (such as Skyr) is very thick and very similar to quark in texture and taste, and it's available at most chain supermarkets. Greek yogurt does not work for this cake, unfortunately. (The yogurt will not work on its own for the Israeli cheesecake recipe above and needs to be combined with cream cheese and labneh.)

European petit beurre biscuits are available at most supermarkets. Tea biscuits from Israel (petit beurre style) are available in the kosher section of most supermarkets.

SERVES 9

Ingredients

- 1 cup milk
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 3.4 oz. instant vanilla pudding mix (like Jell-o or similar)
- 16 oz. Israeli white cheese — quark — or whole milk Icelandic yogurt (Skyr, see note above)
- 1 cup black coffee, at room temperature (or more milk)
- 8 oz. petit beurre or Israeli biscuits

For the chocolate ganache

- 4 oz. 54% semisweet chocolate
- ¼ cup heavy cream

Directions

1. In a stand mixer, whip together the milk, heavy cream, sugar and vanilla pudding powder (you can also use a hand held balloon whisk.) You do not want to whisk for too long and whip the cream, but you want to make sure the mixture is smooth and that there are no patches of pudding powder in it.
2. Remove from the mixer and gently fold in the quark or Icelandic yogurt. Let the mixture set for 5 minutes.
3. Prepare a 9" x 9" pan. Put coffee in a small bowl. Dip the tea biscuits for a few seconds, one or two at a time, and arrange in one layer at the bottom of the pan. Spread half the cheese mixture on top and arrange a second layer of coffee-dipped biscuits on top. Spread the rest of the cheese mixture and end with a third layer of the biscuits. Cover and transfer to the fridge for 1 hour.
4. Melt the chocolate and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup heavy cream in the microwave, for about 20-30 seconds. Let stand for 30 seconds and mix until smooth. Gently pour this mixture over the cake and spread evenly using an icing spatula. Cover and return to the fridge for 8 hours or overnight. The cake keeps covered in the fridge for up to 5 days.