



Smoked Pumpkin Cheesecake

Instead of cooking this cheesecake in the oven as it's usually done, we're smoking it to give it a wood-fired flavor. The crust picks up a subtle smoke flavor that intrigues the palate and the glaze will make your taste buds sing! Move over, pumpkin pie, there's a new star in town!

Yields one 10-inch cheesecake.

Crust Ingredients

- 1½ sticks unsalted butter, melted
- 2½ cups graham cracker crumbs
- ¼ cup sugar
- Pinch of salt

Filling Ingredients

- 2 pounds cream cheese, at room temperature
- 2½ cups sugar
- ¼ cup sour cream
- 2 cups pureed pumpkin
- 6 large eggs, at room temperature
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2½ teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger

Glaze Ingredients

- 1 cup heavy cream
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup [Mount Mansfield Bourbon Barrel Aged maple syrup](#)

Step 1: Preheat Your Smoker to 325 Degrees

- If using a pellet smoker, use a pellet with a mild smoke profile, such as sugar maple or cherry. If using a charcoal smoker, burn high quality lump charcoal and do not add any wood chunks.
- Allow your smoker to preheat for one hour or until you see very thin blue smoke. You want a very clean burning fire for this!

Step 2: Prepare the Crust

- Wipe the inside of a ten-inch springform pan with a paper towel dipped in the melted butter. In a bowl, mix the remaining melted butter with the crumbs, the quarter cup of sugar, and the pinch of salt. Press the crumb mixture into the bottom and slightly up the sides of the pan, packing it tightly and evenly.
- No springform pan? If you prefer to use a cake pan instead of the springform pan, that's fine too. You won't need to wrap it in foil (step 6), but make sure you grease it very well with the unsalted butter.

Step 3: Bake the Crust

- Set the pan directly onto the cooking grate in your smoker and cook it until it turns golden brown, about 15–20 minutes. Remove it from the smoker and cool it on a wire rack for fifteen minutes.

Step 4: Mix the Filling

- Bring a pot of water to a rolling boil for the water bath.
- Meanwhile, beat the cream cheese with a mixer until smooth. Add the remaining 2-1/2 cups of sugar and the eggs, then beat it just until it's light and fluffy. Scrape down the sides of the bowl and beaters as needed.

- Beat in the sour cream, then add the pumpkin, vanilla, salt, and spices. Beat until combined very well.
- Pour the mixture into the cooled crust.

Step 5: Remove Air Bubbles

- Hold the pan several inches above the countertop and let it drop evenly. Repeat 3–4 times. This slight jarring forces any large air bubbles to the surface of the cheesecake before baking. If a bubble comes to the surface during baking, it will create an unsightly dark spot.

Step 6: Wrap the Springform Pan in Aluminum Foil

- Wrap the springform pan in two layers of heavy-duty aluminum foil in preparation for the water bath. Fold the sides of the foil to form a sheet just wide enough to reach the top edge of the pan. Be extremely careful not to tear the foil because even a pinhole will let water seep into the cheesecake.

Step 7: Bake the Cheesecake

- Set a full-sized aluminum pan or a large roasting pan on the smoker's cooking grate, then set the springform pan into the center of it. Pour the boiling water into the foil pan. The water should cover at least one-third of the cake pan's height.
- Bake the cheesecake until the outside of the cheesecake sets, and a thermometer probe inserted comes out clean, with a reading from the center of the filling of 175–180°. This should take about 1-3/4–2 hours. If baking multiple cheesecakes in the same smoker, it may take up to 3 hours.

Step 8: Make the Glaze

- Meanwhile, simmer the glaze ingredients in a small pot over medium heat for fifteen minutes, stirring constantly, then remove from the heat. Let it cool on the counter for thirty minutes, then pour it into a

glass measuring cup and refrigerate it. If making the cheesecake more than several days ahead of time, leave this step until the day you serve the cheesecake.

Step 9: Cool It

- Remove the cheesecake from the smoker and the water bath, tightly tent the top in foil, and set the cheesecake on a wire rack to cool at room temperature for two hours.

Step 10: Freeze It

- Keep the cheesecake covered in foil and refrigerate it for 3–4 hours or overnight.
- Move the cheesecake to the freezer for eight hours or overnight.
- After the cheesecake has been in the freezer for at least eight hours, remove the foil, then very briefly run hot water over the sides of the springform ring, making sure to angle it so the hot water doesn't run onto the top of the cheesecake. If the ring doesn't release easily, run more hot water over it. Remove the springform ring and the bottom of the pan.
- If you used a regular cake pan instead of a springform pan, dip the pan briefly into very hot water, then turn the pan upside down and shake it, using your fingertips to catch the cheesecake as it slides out (repeat as needed until it slides out).
- Wrap the cheesecake in a layer of heavy-duty aluminum foil, flip it over and wrap it in another layer of foil. Alternating the foil folds eliminates the slight risk of freezer burn. The cheesecake can now be stored for up to six months in the freezer.
- Keep it frozen until you're ready to slice it.

Step 11: Serve It

- Warm the glaze slightly.

- Remove the cheesecake from the freezer just before slicing it. By the time you get the slices plated and served, it should be thawed perfectly.
- Pour a small amount of glaze over the top of each piece, letting it run over the sides.
- If desired, place a dollop of whipped cream on each slice.

Professional Slicing Tricks

- Transfer the cheesecake to a cutting board.
- A clean hot blade makes the best cuts. Heat your knife (a twelve-inch slicing knife works perfectly for this) under hot running water. Run the hot water over the knife blade for several seconds on each side. Wipe the blade dry with a paper towel and cut the cake in half.
- Rinse and wipe the knife clean with a paper towel.
- Reheat and dry the knife again, using a clean paper towel, then cut the halves into quarters.
- Repeat the cleaning and heating steps for each cut. It's easier and faster to make nice slices if you cut each half separately.

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