

Lemon Cheesecake Squares with Chocolate Ganache

These cheesecake squares are the perfect blend of rich and refreshing. A smooth, creamy filling with a subtle hint of lemon sits atop a buttery crust, all finished with a silky chocolate ganache topping. Perfect for parties, potlucks, or stashing in the freezer for a sweet treat anytime!

Ingredients

For the Crust

- 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups (198 g) graham cracker crumbs
- 2 tbsp granulated sugar
- 1 tsp light or dark brown sugar
- 8 tbsp (1 stick) unsalted butter, melted

For the Cheesecake Filling

- 24 oz (680 g) cream cheese, softened to room temperature
- 1 cup (200 g) granulated sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (120 g) sour cream
- 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp vanilla paste or extract
- 1 tsp lemon zest (you can omit lemon zest if you want a plain cheesecake)
- 3 large eggs + 1 large egg yolk, at room temperature

For the Chocolate Ganache

- 4 oz (113 g) dark chocolate, finely chopped
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (118 ml) heavy whipping cream

Instructions

1. Prep the Pan & Oven

- Preheat oven to 325°F (163°C).
- Line a 9x9-inch baking pan with parchment paper, leaving some overhang for easy removal.

2. Make the Crust

1. In a mixing bowl, combine graham cracker crumbs, granulated sugar, and brown sugar.
2. Pour in the melted butter and stir with a fork until the mixture resembles wet sand.
3. Press the mixture firmly and evenly into the bottom of the prepared pan. (*No need to pre-bake.*)

3. Prepare the Cheesecake Filling

1. In a large mixing bowl (or stand mixer with paddle attachment), beat the softened cream cheese and granulated sugar on medium speed until smooth and creamy—avoid overmixing.
2. Add sour cream, vanilla, and lemon zest. Mix until just combined.

3. Beat one egg at a time in a small bowl, then add to the batter, mixing on low speed until fully incorporated. Repeat with remaining eggs and yolk.
4. Scrape down the sides of the bowl to ensure all ingredients are evenly mixed.
4. Bake the Cheesecake
 1. Pour the filling over the prepared crust and smooth the top with an offset spatula.
 2. Gently tap the pan on the counter a few times to release air bubbles.
 3. Bake for 40–45 minutes on the center rack, until the edges are slightly puffed and the center has a slight jiggle.
 4. Remove from the oven and let cool to room temperature.
 5. Chill in the refrigerator for at least 6 hours, or overnight for best texture.

Tip: Before adding the ganache, blot any condensation or moisture on the surface with a paper towel.

5. Make the Ganache

1. Place chopped chocolate in a heatproof bowl.
2. In a small saucepan, heat the cream over medium heat until it just begins to simmer. Do not boil.
3. Pour the hot cream over the chocolate and cover the bowl loosely with foil. Let sit for 5 minutes.
4. Uncover and gently whisk until smooth and glossy.
5. Pour over the chilled cheesecake and spread evenly with an offset spatula.
6. Refrigerate for 30 minutes to set.

6. Serve & Store

- Cut into squares and serve chilled.
- To freeze: Place squares on a parchment-lined baking sheet and freeze until solid. Wrap individually in plastic wrap and store in an airtight container or vacuum seal.
- To thaw: Transfer to the refrigerator overnight before serving.