



Strawberry Cheesecake Squares

Sweet strawberries swirl through the pecan crusted cheesecake

Pecan Crust

1 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 cup firmly packed brown sugar
1 cup unsalted butter, cut into chunks
1/2 cup quick oats (not instant)
1 cup chopped pecans, divided

Cream Cheese Filling

2 (8 oz.) packages cream cheese, softened
1 cup granulated sugar
4 eggs
2 teaspoons vanilla
1/4 teaspoon grated lime peel
1 (21 oz.) can strawberry topping/filling
Serve with: Whipped cream if desired

Prepare Crust:

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Grease 13x9-inch baking pan; line pan with parchment paper for easier removal after baking.
- In a mixing bowl, combine flour and brown sugar. Add butter; mix until mixture forms coarse crumbs.
- Add oats and 1/2 cup chopped pecans; mix until ingredients are combined.
- Press dough evenly into prepared baking pan; sprinkle the top of crust with the remaining 1/2 cup chopped pecans.
- Bake in 350-degree F. oven for 20 minutes or until crust is lightly browned.
- Set aside; cool for 10 minutes.

Prepare Filling:

- In a mixing bowl, mix cream cheese and sugar until creamy; add eggs, one at a time, beating well; add vanilla and lime peel.
- Pour over the prebaked crust; spreading evenly.
- Place 1 cup of topping in a small bowl. With scissors, cut any larger strawberries into smaller pieces. Set remaining strawberry topping aside.
- Add chopped strawberry topping by spoonfuls over filling; swirl the topping lightly into the cream cheese.
- Bake in 350-degree F. oven for 40 to 45 minutes or center is set.
- Cool completely in pan on wire rack.
- Place in refrigerator to chill for 2 to 3 hours.
- Loosen sides completely down through crust with spatula or knife.
- Remove from pan; discard parchment paper.
- Place on cutting surface. Trim the edges from the cheesecake. Cut the cheesecake into 20 squares.
- Place on a platter; cover; chill in the refrigerator until serving.
- Serve with remaining strawberry topping in a small container so guests can spoon it over the dessert.
- If desired, add a swirl of whipped cream. Yield: 20 cheesecake bars

Cook's Note: I use a warm long cutting knife with warm water and wipe it off after each cut for cleaner edges. I also usually serve more strawberry topping in a small bowl on the side. When removing the baked recipe from the pan, it is very important to use a spatula and separate the crust from the pan going completely around the pan to the very bottom. Otherwise, the dish may not come out of pan very easily.

About the Recipe: Strawberries and cheesecake are the perfect pair for a special occasion dessert. This recipe combines the creamy cheese richness with fresh berry flavor on a crunchy pecan crust. Cutting it into squares makes it easy to serve a larger group. Add the extra strawberry topping on the side.