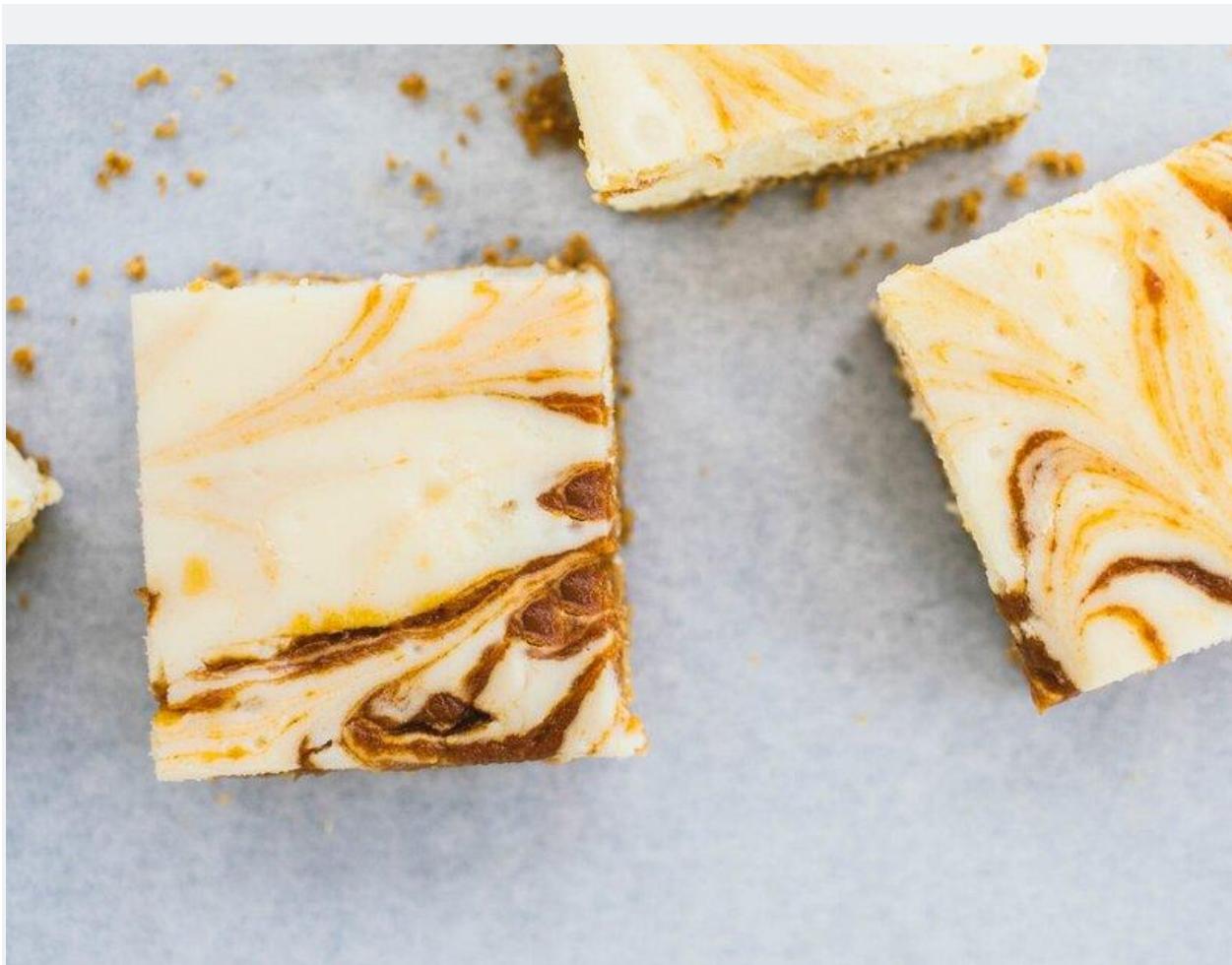


Cream Cheese Pumpkin Bars

Active Time 30 MIN | Total Time 1 HR | Yield Serves : Makes 12 large bars or 24 small bars

By SARAH KIEFFER

Sarah Kieffer's gently spiced pumpkin bars are the perfect segue-into-autumn treats. The cream cheese enhances the pumpkin filling without making everything too sweet. As Kieffer writes, "I like pumpkin pie alright, but in all honesty I will always take a slice of anything else over it, especially if cheesecake is an option. But pumpkin pie swirled into cheesecake? I will never say no."



Ingredients

FOR THE CRUST

1 1/2 cups [150 g] graham cracker crumbs (approximately 10 crackers)
3 tablespoons granulated sugar
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon ground ginger
4 tablespoons [57 g] unsalted butter, melted

FOR THE PUMPKIN PIE FILLING

1 cup [224 g] unsweetened pumpkin purée
1/2 cup [100 g] brown sugar
1 large egg, at room temperature
1 tablespoon maple syrup
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon ground ginger
1/4 teaspoon freshly grated or ground nutmeg
1/4 teaspoon table salt

FOR THE CREAM CHEESE FILLING

24 ounces [678 g] cream cheese, at room temperature
1 1/2 cups [300 g] granulated sugar
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
1/4 teaspoon table salt
3 large eggs, at room temperature
1/2 cup [120 g] heavy cream

How to Make It

Step 1 Make the crust

Adjust an oven rack to the middle of the oven. Preheat the oven to 325°F [170°C]. Line a 9 by 13 in [23 by 33 cm] pan with parchment paper, leaving an overhang on two sides.

Step 2

Whisk together the graham cracker crumbs, granulated sugar, cinnamon, and ginger in a medium bowl. Add the melted butter and mix with a spatula until evenly incorporated.

Step 3

Press the mixture onto the bottom of the prepared pan and bake for 10 minutes. Remove the pan from the oven and let cool. After the pan has cooled, wrap the outside sides of the pan in two layers of aluminum foil, with the shiny side facing out (this helps keep the sides of the cheesecake from browning).

Step 4 Make the pumpkin pie filling

In a medium bowl, combine the pumpkin, brown sugar, egg, maple syrup, cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, and salt, and mix until completely combined.

Step 5 Make the cream cheese filling

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a paddle, or using a hand mixer, beat the cream cheese on medium speed until light and completely smooth, 4 to 5 minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl often, making sure all the cream cheese is silky smooth. Add the granulated sugar and beat on medium speed until completely incorporated, stopping to scrape down the sides of the bowl as needed, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the vanilla and salt, and beat on medium speed for 2 to 3 minutes. Add the eggs one at a time, beating on low speed after each addition until just combined. Add the heavy cream, and mix on low speed until combined. Using a spatula, give the filling a couple of turns to make sure it is fully mixed.

Step 6 Assemble the bars

Pour the cream cheese filling over the cooled crust and use an offset spatula to smooth the top. Dollop the pumpkin pie filling over the top. Use the tip of a butter knife to swirl the pumpkin into the cream cheese batter, being careful not to cut into the crust. Bang the bottom of the pan on the counter a few times to help get rid of any air bubbles.

Step 7

Bake the cheesecake until the center of the cheesecake registers 150°F [65°C], 30 to 35 minutes. The outside two to three inches [5 to 8 cm] of the cheesecake will be puffed and fairly firm and set, but the center will still be jiggly at this point. Turn off the heat, open the oven door just a crack, and let the cheesecake rest and cool in the warm oven for 30 minutes.

Step 8

Transfer the pan to a wire rack and let cool. Once the cheesecake is completely cool, place a piece of parchment over the top of the pan (this helps keep condensation off the top of the cheesecake) and transfer it to the refrigerator. Let chill for at least 4 hours or overnight. Slice the bars and serve. The bars can be served cold or at room temperature but keep best in the refrigerator for up to a week.