

Creamy dessert has place in history, diners' hearts

The history of the cheesecake, the ultimate milchig (dairy) dessert, can be traced to Hanukkah celebrations during medieval times.

According to Joan Nathan, a Jewish cooking expert and the author of "The Jewish Holiday Kitchen," during the Middle Ages it became customary to eat cheesecake in memory of the widow Judith. Legend has it that Judith served the Assyrian general Holofernes cheesecake and wine which he feasted on so heavily that he fell asleep. Judith beheaded him and saved the Jews from death.

"Of course, those cheesecakes were nothing like the ones we know today," said Nathan. Her research shows Judith's versions were probably rather lumpy and tasted more like savory cheese pancakes because they were made from the curd of soured cream that was hung from a bag and allowed to drain. "The cheesecake's taste and historical significance, however, grew over the years," said Nathan. "The Jews carried cheesecake recipes to all the places of their wanderings."

Today, some Jewish families honor Judith by serving cheese latkes (pancakes) during Hanukkah while others prefer rugelach (a cream cheese cookie). Another option is a more traditional baked

cheesecake. Though not made with traditional ingredients, Light Pumpkin Praline Cheesecake is both deliciously indulgent and in keeping with our more health-conscious diets thanks to lower-fat dairy products and a wholesome wheat germ crust.

Whereas the classic graham cracker crust relies on butter for its flavor and crunchy texture, this wheat germ crust uses just a small amount of melted margarine in combination with an egg white and brown sugar.

Low-fat cottage cheese and egg substitute replace the traditional cream cheese and whole eggs to reduce the amount of fat and cholesterol in the filling. To duplicate the smooth, creamy texture inherent in higher fat cheeses, the cottage cheese is pureed in a blender or food processor. The remaining filling ingredients are added in two parts, and the mixture is blended again.

To allow time for the flavors to fully develop, bake the cheesecake early in the day, or even the night before, cover and refrigerate. The garnish — pecan halves and a drizzle of like maple-flavored syrup — is as elegant as it is easy.

LIGHT PUMPKIN PRALINE CHEESECAKE

Crust
1½ cups wheat germ

¼ cup firmly packed brown sugar
3 tablespoons margarine, melted
1 egg white, slightly beaten
Filling
One 16-ounce carton (2 cups) 1 percent low-fat cottage cheese
½ cup canned pumpkin
½ cup firmly packed brown sugar
½ teaspoon vanilla
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
Dash of ground nutmeg
½ cup egg substitute or 4 egg whites, slightly beaten
20 pecan halves (optional)
2 tablespoons lite maple-flavored syrup

Heat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly spray 9-inch pie plate with non-stick cooking spray or grease lightly. For crust, combine wheat germ and brown sugar. Add margarine and egg white; mix well. Press mixture onto bottom and sides of prepared pie plate. Bake 8 minutes; remove from oven.

For filling, place cottage cheese in blender container or food processor; cover. Blend until smooth. Add pumpkin, brown sugar, vanilla and spices; blend well. Add egg substitute; blend just until all ingredients are combined. Pour into crust. Bake



Light cheesecake: Light Pumpkin Praline Cheesecake makes an elegant ending to a festive holiday meal.

40 to 45 minutes or until center is almost set. Cool completely. Refrigerate 3 hours or overnight. Just before serving, arrange pecans on top of cheesecake; drizzle with syrup. 10 SERVINGS
Nutrition information per serving:

Calories 220, Calories From Fat 54, Total Fat 5g, Saturated Fat 1g, Cholesterol 0mg, Sodium 275mg, Carbohydrate 28g, Dietary Fiber 2g, Protein 13g.
Recipe from Kretschmer wheat germ.

Holidays attract stains

Here are some tips to get out some of the toughest holiday stains:

■ **Turkey grease and meat juice** — Dampen stain. Rub with a dual enzyme detergent and wash in hottest temperature safe for fabric. Make sure stain is completely removed before drying in the dryer or ironing.

■ **Gravy** — Gently scrape up as much solid surface material as possible. Presoak the fabric in an enzyme detergent for 30 minutes before washing in the hottest water safe for fabric. Always test for colorfastness.

■ **Wine** — Sponge or soak stain promptly in cool water. While still wet, rub detergent directly into any remaining stain. Launder in hottest temperature safe for fabric using bleach safe for fabric. For older stains, presoak in an enzyme detergent. This applies to coffee, tea, soft drinks and alcoholic beverages.

■ **Chocolate** — Soak in an enzyme detergent for 30 minutes. If stain remains, presoak overnight. Then wash in the hottest temperature safe for fabric.

For expert advice or to receive a free laundry guide, call the toll-free Wisk Washline (1-800-ASK-WISK) 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Friday.

Chicken and shrimp saute fits into hectic holiday schedules

AP — Holiday entertaining can be a joyful occasion. But the flip side is a lot of shopping and hard work. One solution: add easy-to-make sauteed chicken and shrimp

to your repertoire. This dish is an elegant jumble of holiday colors — green and yellow bell peppers, red tomatoes, white morsels of chicken and pink, briny shrimp.

CHICKEN AND SHRIMP SAUTE

4 tablespoons butter
8 ounces boned and skinned chicken breasts, cut into

1½-inch chunks
8 ounces large shrimp, shelled and deveined
½ Teaspoon salt
¼ Teaspoon ground pepper
1 cup thinly sliced sweet yellow bell pepper
1 cup thinly sliced sweet green bell pepper
15-ounce can stewed tomatoes
8 ounces fettuccine, cooked

according to package directions

In a large skillet over medium heat, melt 2 tablespoons of the butter. Add chicken and shrimp. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Cook, stirring frequently, until chicken is light golden and shrimp are pink, about 4 minutes.
Using slotted spoon, remove chicken and shrimp; set aside. To skillet add yellow and green

peppers; cook, stirring occasionally, until crisp-tender, 2 to 3 minutes.

Using a knife, break up tomatoes in the can. Add to skillet, stirring to loosen brown bits on bottoms of pan; heat until bubbling, 1 to 2 minutes. Add reserved chicken and shrimp. Stir in remaining 2 tablespoons butter, 1 tablespoon at a time, until just melted. Arrange pasta on serving platter; top with chicken-shrimp mixture. Makes 4 servings.

WHAT'S COOKING

Send items to be considered for publication in What's Cooking to: Kasey Wyzonik, Taste/Entertainment editor, The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150. Our Fax number is 591-7279.

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