

Caramel Cheesecake Bars: Decadent & Easy Dessert

Get ready to indulge in a truly luxurious dessert that's surprisingly easy to make:



OVEN
350°F

TIME
40 to 45 min

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INGREDIENTS

3 cups pecan shortbread cookie crumbs (about 24 cookies from a 13-ounce package)

2 tablespoons granulated sugar

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup salted butter, melted

16 ounces cream cheese, softened to room temperature

$\frac{2}{3}$ cup granulated sugar

2 large eggs, room temperature

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup sour cream

13.4 ounces dulce de leche caramel (canned or jarred)

3 tablespoons heavy cream

Swaps and Notes:

Pecan Shortbread Cookie Crumbs: Lorna Doone shortbread cookies are a classic choice for this type of crust. You can also use plain shortbread cookies, graham crackers, or even vanilla wafers. If not using pecan shortbread, you might consider adding $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of finely chopped toasted pecans to the crust mixture for nutty flavor.

Salted Butter (Crust): The salt in the butter helps balance the sweetness. If using unsalted butter, add a tiny pinch ($\frac{1}{8}$ tsp) of salt to the crust mixture.

Cream Cheese (Cheesecake Layer): Ensure cream cheese is at room temperature for a smooth, lump-free batter. Full-fat cream cheese

(block-style) is essential for the best texture and richness.

Eggs (Cheesecake Layer): Room temperature eggs incorporate more smoothly into the batter.

Vanilla Extract: Pure vanilla extract offers the best flavor.

Sour Cream (Cheesecake Layer): Adds moisture, tang, and a velvety texture to the cheesecake. Full-fat sour cream is recommended.

Dulce de Leche Caramel: Canned or jarred dulce de leche is perfect. If you can't find it, you can make your own by slowly simmering a can of sweetened condensed milk (ensure it's submerged in water) for 2-3 hours. Alternatively, use a good quality thick caramel sauce.

Heavy Cream (Caramel Topping): Thins the dulce de leche slightly to make it pourable and creamy.

DIRECTIONS

1. Let's bake and chill these decadent : Caramel Cheesecake Bars!
2. Preheat : Oven & Prep Pan: Preheat the oven to 350°F (175°C). Line a 9x9-inch baking pan with parchment paper. Be sure you have enough parchment paper hanging over the sides of the pan to create "slings" - this will allow you to easily lift the cooled caramel cheesecake bars out of the pan later.
3. Make the : Crust: In a medium-sized mixing bowl, combine the 3 cups of pecan shortbread cookie crumbs, 2 tablespoons of granulated sugar, and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of melted salted butter. Stir everything together until the crumbs are well moistened and resemble wet sand.
4. Press the : Crust: Press the crust mixture into an even layer in the bottom of the prepared baking pan. Use the bottom of a glass or your fingers to pack it in as tightly and evenly as possible. This creates a firm base for your cheesecake. Set the prepared crust aside.
5. Prepare : Cheesecake Batter (Cream Cheese & Sugar): In a large mixing bowl, with a handheld electric mixer (or stand mixer with paddle attachment) on medium speed, beat the softened cream cheese for 1 to 2 minutes, or until it is completely smooth and fluffy. Add the $\frac{2}{3}$ cup of granulated sugar to the cream cheese and beat for an additional 30 seconds to combine thoroughly.
6. Add : Eggs & Vanilla: Add the 2 room temperature large eggs and 1 teaspoon of vanilla extract to the cream cheese mixture. Mix just until fully incorporated. You do not want to beat too much air into the cheesecake batter at this stage, as too much air can cause

cracking during baking.

7. **Stir in : Sour Cream:** Gently stir the 1/3 cup of sour cream into the cream cheese mixture until you have a nice smooth, creamy cheesecake batter.
8. **Pour & : Tap Batter:** Pour the prepared cheesecake batter over the pecan cookie crust in the baking pan. Use a rubber spatula or the back of a spoon to smooth out the top. Gently tap the pan onto the counter a couple of times to release any trapped air bubbles in your cheesecake batter. This will help to ensure you have a nice smooth cheesecake once baked and prevent large air pockets.
9. **Bake : Cheesecake:** Bake for 40 to 45 minutes, or until the edges are lightly golden and the center of the cheesecake does not jiggle excessively if the pan is moved slightly. It should still have a slight jiggle in the very center, as it will continue to set as it cools.
10. **Slow : Cool (Prevent Cracks):** Turn off the oven, but leave the cheesecake inside. Crack open the oven door about 1 to 2 inches (you can stick a wooden spoon in the door to keep it ajar). You will leave your cheesecake bars in the oven to start to slowly cool for 30 minutes. This helps prevent the top of the cheesecake from cracking due to sudden temperature changes.
11. **Prepare : Caramel Topping:** While the cheesecake is slowly cooling, in a small, microwave-safe bowl, add the 13.4 ounces of dulce de leche caramel and 3 tablespoons of heavy cream. Heat in the microwave for 30 to 45 seconds on high. Stir with a spoon or whisk until the mixture is smooth and pourable.
12. **Top with : Caramel:** Once you remove your cheesecake bars from the oven after the slow cooling period, immediately spread the prepared dulce de leche caramel sauce in an even layer over the entire top of the cheesecake.
13. **Chill & : Set:** Allow the caramel cheesecake bars to cool on the counter at room temperature for another 30 to 60 minutes. Then, place them into the refrigerator to chill and set completely. This chilling process is vital! Chill your caramel cheesecake bars for at least 3 to 4 hours or, ideally, up to overnight before removing them from the baking pan (using the parchment paper slings) to slice and serve.

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Salted Butter (Crust): The salt in the butter helps balance the sweetness.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Room Temperature Cream Cheese & Eggs: Make sure that the cream cheese and eggs are at room temperature.

This is essential for a smooth, lump-free cheesecake filling.

Don't Overbeat Cheesecake: Beat the cream cheese and sugar well, but once the eggs and vanilla are added, mix just until combined. Overbeating at this stage incorporates too much air, which can cause cracks.

More recipes: [ChefManiac.com](https://chefmaniac.com)

Original recipe: <https://chefmaniac.com/caramel-cheesecake-bars-decadent-easy-dessert/>