

# MARCH

## Classic Cheesecake

This month, join the Better Baking Academy with Bob's Red Mill in mastering the beloved, classic cheesecake. Our cheesecake has an uber creamy, dreamy texture thanks to a triple-threat dairy base comprised of heavy whipping cream, sour cream, and cream cheese. The vanilla bean seed-speckled filling covers a crunchy, buttery crust made with a winning combination of Bob's Red Mill Old Fashioned Rolled Oats and Bob's Red Mill Super-Fine Blanched Almond Flour. Our recipe comes complete with a foolproof guide to keep your cheesecake from cracking under pressure (literally) and all the helpful tips you need to make this an effortless gluten-free stunner.



# INGREDIENT BREAKDOWN

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Great recipes require great ingredients. Here's how each ingredient creates the ultimate cheesecake.

**BOB'S RED MILL OLD FASHIONED ROLLED OATS:** We grind Bob's Red Mill Old Fashioned Rolled Oats in a food processor to make a less-fine version of oat flour. Combined with almond flour, butter, salt, granulated sugar, and cinnamon, the ground oats bake into a golden and crisp crust that takes on the delightful, mild flavor of toasted oats.

**BOB'S RED MILL GLUTEN FREE ORGANIC OLD FASHIONED ROLLED OATS:** At the onset of gluten-free baking, because of cross-contamination in factories, oats were not considered a strictly gluten-free product. But at Bob's Red Mill, these oats are processed, packaged, and tested in the company's dedicated gluten-free facility. So, if you're looking to make this recipe gluten-free, make sure you reach for these specific oats.

**BOB'S RED MILL SUPER-FINE BLANCHED ALMOND FLOUR:** Also called almond meal, almond flour is made from blanched whole almonds that have been ground. This fine meal is easier to sift and has a pale color due to the use of blanched almonds, which are almonds that are blanched in order to remove their skins. Because almonds are high in fat, almond flour adds tenderness to our base crumb crust. Inherently gluten-free, almond flour can be used for both a regular cheesecake crust and a gluten-free version. To keep it at peak freshness, almond flour is best stored in the refrigerator or freezer.

**GRANULATED SUGAR:** While sugar brings in a touch of sweetness to the crust and the filling, it also helps keep the rich custard of the cheesecake from curdling during the baking process. So, try not to reduce the sugar in this recipe, as each granule helps keep your cheesecake from cracking.

**KOSHER SALT:** We bake with kosher salt because, unlike most commercial salt, it doesn't contain iodine, making it taste purer and more palatable. Also, the salt crystals are larger. Table salt is much finer, so you would use half of what a recipe with kosher salt calls for.

**CINNAMON:** A touch of ground cinnamon brings warmth to our crumb crust.

**UNSALTED BUTTER:** Melted butter works as the cohesive and tasty glue for our crumb crust.



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**CREAM CHEESE:** The heart of all cheesecake is, of course, cream cheese. A staggering three blocks of cream cheese go into this recipe. What makes this such a beloved baking staple is its high milk fat content of at least 33%, a richness that makes all it touches creamier and more tender. Cheesecakes of old were often made with coarser cheeses that resembled ricotta or cottage cheese. When cream cheese came on the market in the early 1900s, bakers began to prefer it, as it offered unparalleled smoothness to their cheesecakes.

## **BOB'S RED MILL ORGANIC UNBLEACHED ALL-PURPOSE FLOUR:**

Flour is often used as the main source of gluten and structure to baked goods—but it doesn't serve that purpose in our cheesecake. Instead, we use it like a starch. A little starch goes a long way in helping you keep your eggs from curdling and coagulating. Three tablespoons of all-purpose flour work much in the same way cornstarch works to create a thick, stable custard.

**BOB'S RED MILL GLUTEN FREE 1-TO-1 BAKING FLOUR:** For those looking to make this cheesecake completely gluten-free, you can use Bob's Red Mill Gluten Free 1-to-1 Baking Flour in place of all-purpose flour. The gluten-free formula will also help protect your cheesecake custard from curdling and cracking, as it sports tapioca flour, xanthum gum, and potato starch. Each of these ingredients helps thicken and stabilize egg-rich custards during the heating process.

**VANILLA BEAN PASTE:** Vanilla bean paste is a viscous combination of vanilla extract and vanilla bean seeds. We like to use it for its lovely speckled appearance and concentrated flavor.

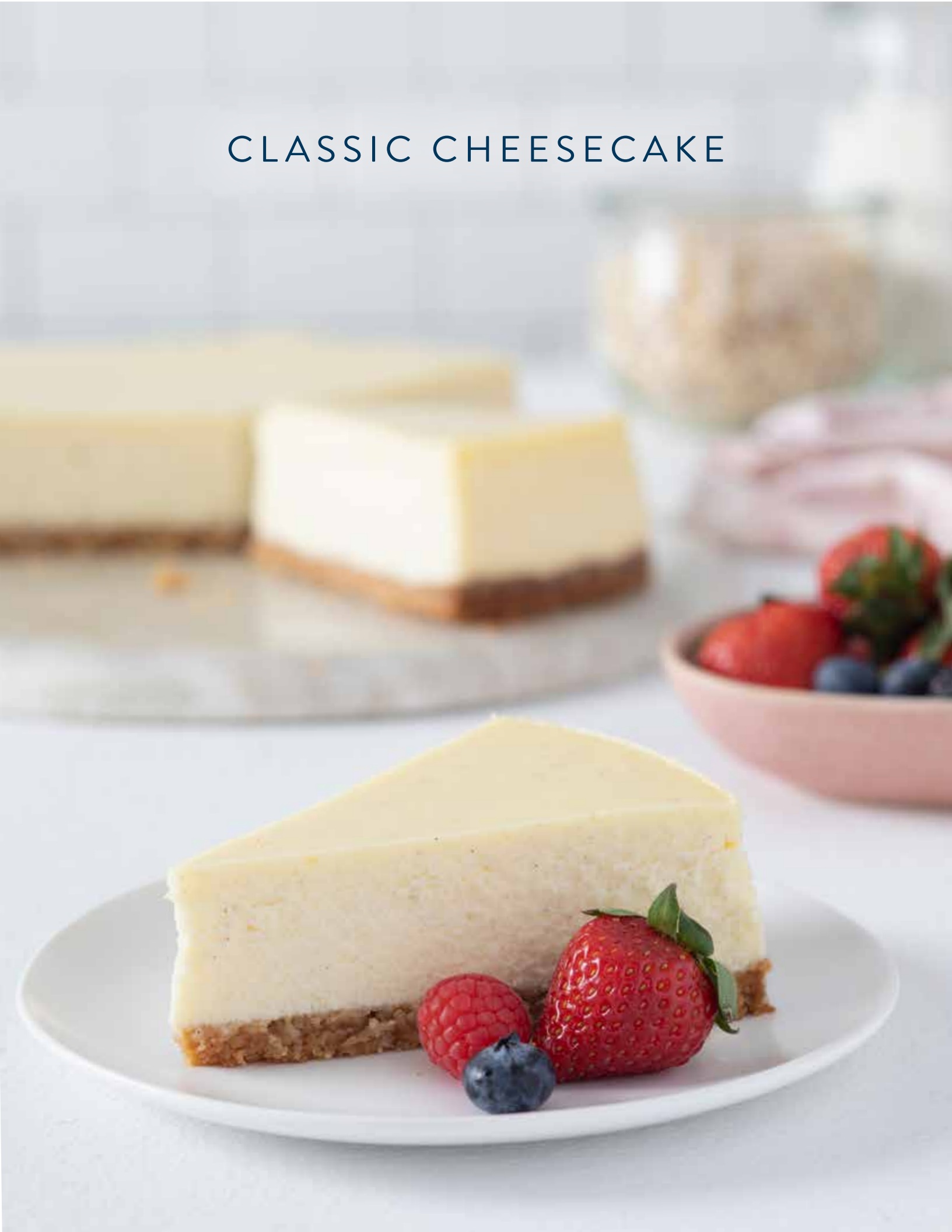
**EGGS:** Eggs are an essential element of cheesecake and all other custard-based desserts. Adding richness and a smooth texture, the proteins in the eggs set up during the gentle baking process, solidifying the dense network of dairy and sugar into a sliceable whole. Too many eggs will create a cracked and sunken cheesecake with an overly firm texture. Too few eggs and the cheesecake won't set well. So, use our exact number of eggs for perfect results.

**SOUR CREAM:** Though cream cheese is the definite hero of cheesecake, it can't create a perfect dessert without a helping hand. With cream cheese alone, the filling will split and have a mealy texture. Sour cream is often added to the mix to help create a silkier filling and improve the overall tangy flavor.

**HEAVY WHIPPING CREAM:** In addition to the sour cream, heavy whipping cream also improves the texture of cheesecake. Don't be tempted to substitute half-and-half or milk for the heavy cream, though—you'll risk making your filling too runny.



# CLASSIC CHEESECAKE



## CLASSIC CHEESECAKE

Makes 1 (9-inch) cake

*Towering and impressive, this cheesecake consists of a velvety filling that is both soft enough to slice like butter and firm enough to hold its shape. Its golden oat and almond flour crust—made with Bob’s Red Mill Old Fashioned Rolled Oats and Super-Fine Blanched Almond Flour—acts as crunchy relief to the creaminess.*

- 1 cup (100 grams) Bob’s Red Mill Old Fashioned Rolled Oats
- 1 cup (96 grams) Bob’s Red Mill Super-Fine Blanched Almond Flour
- 1¾ cups (350 grams) granulated sugar, divided
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt, divided
- ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ cup (57 grams) unsalted butter, melted
- 3 (8-ounce) packages (680 grams) cream cheese, cubed and room temperature
- 3 tablespoons (24 grams) Bob’s Red Mill Organic Unbleached All-Purpose Flour
- 2 teaspoons (12 grams) vanilla bean paste
- 4 large eggs (200 grams), room temperature
- ¾ cup (180 grams) sour cream, room temperature
- ¼ cup (60 grams) heavy whipping cream, room temperature

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Spray bottom of a 9-inch springform pan with baking spray with flour.

2. In the work bowl of a food processor, pulse oats until finely ground; scrape sides of bowl. Add almond flour, ¼ cup (50 grams) sugar, ¼ teaspoon salt, and cinnamon; pulse just until combined. Add melted butter, and pulse until well combined and mixture holds together when pressed, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Using a small measuring cup or bottom of a glass cup, press crumb mixture into bottom of prepared pan.

3. Bake until lightly golden, set, and fragrant, 20 to 25 minutes. Let cool on a wire rack for 30 minutes. Wrap bottom and sides of pan in a double layer of heavy-duty foil; place in a large oven bag, tucking ends so bag is flush with top edge of pan. Reduce oven temperature to 325°F (170°C).

4. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat cream cheese at medium speed until smooth and creamy, 1 to 2 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add all-purpose flour, vanilla bean paste, remaining ½ cups (300 grams) sugar, and remaining ¼ teaspoon salt; beat at low speed just until combined. Increase mixer speed to medium-low, and beat until well combined, about 1 minute, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add eggs, one at a time, beating just until combined after each addition. Add sour cream and cream; beat until well combined, about 30 seconds, stopping to scrape sides of bowl.

5. Spray sides of prepared pan with baking spray with flour. Pour cream cheese mixture onto prepared crust. Lightly tap sides of pan to spread batter into an even layer and release any air bubbles, smoothing top with a small offset spatula if necessary. Using a wooden pick, pop and fill any air bubbles that rise to surface. Carefully place springform pan in a large roasting pan.

6. Position oven rack so top of springform pan is 5 to 5½ inches from top heating element; place roasting pan in oven, and add hot water to come 1 inch up sides of springform pan.

7. Bake until edges are set, top looks slightly dry, and center is still jiggly, 1 hour and 20 minutes to 1½ hours, loosely covering with foil to prevent excess browning, if necessary. Turn oven off, and leave cheesecake in oven with door open 4 inches for 1 hour.

8. Carefully remove and discard roasting bag; let cheesecake cool completely in pan on a wire rack, 1 to

2 hours. Refrigerate in pan on a wire rack overnight, loosely covering with foil only when completely cool to prevent condensation from forming on top of cheesecake.

9. Carefully remove chilled cheesecake from pan and transfer to a serving plate. Use a warm, dry knife to slice when ready to serve.

### PRO TIPS

Although poking the surface may cause it to crack, checking the temperature of your cheesecake can help you get a feel for what it should look like when done. For a properly baked cheesecake, an instant-read thermometer inserted in center should register 150°F (66°C) to 155°F (68°C).

To make your cheesecake gluten-free, be sure to use Bob’s Red Mill Gluten Free Organic Old Fashioned Rolled Oats and substitute 3 tablespoons (27 grams) Bob’s Red Mill Gluten Free 1-to-1 Baking Flour for the all-purpose flour.

# TEMPERATURE CHECK

Before you reach for your stand mixer, make sure these key ingredients are at room temperature



**Cream cheese:** Cream cheese, like butter, is hard to whip when cold because its milk fat is still firm and solid. Chilled cream cheese, when mixed with other, more liquid ingredients, will take on a curdled appearance. So, for smooth incorporation, opt for mixing room temperature cream cheese with other room temperature ingredients.

**Eggs:** Cold eggs may seem a minor problem when pulling together most doughs, but when it comes to cheesecake, temperature is everything. Four cold eggs can force your room temperature cream cheese to resolidify in spots, creating chunks that are hard to reincorporate and may cause you to overbeat the mixture. If you continue mixing to smooth out the cold chunks you've created, you end up whipping air into your eggs, toughening the overall cheesecake.

**Sour cream:** One of the last ingredients you'll mix into your batter, if cold, sour cream will need more than the gentle 30 seconds of mixing time our recipe calls for. So, make sure it's registering the same room temperature as everything else.

**Heavy whipping cream:** Consider heavy whipping cream the last domino in your series of room temperature dairy products. Don't let cold heavy cream ruin the creamy concoction you've made.

### PRO TIP

You can freeze butter—but should you freeze cream cheese? Nope. Unlike butter, which has a low water content, almost half of cream cheese is water, which means when it's frozen, the silky texture will be forever altered by the formation of ice crystals, making it gritty. Best to keep it in the refrigerator and not stockpile it with the ice cubes.

# CUE THE CRUST

How to make your golden crumb crust



**1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Spray bottom of a 9-inch springform pan with baking spray with flour.** Pan prep is an important part of any cheesecake process, making sure things won't crack and stick in the future. (See Cracking the Case.)

**2. In the work bowl of a food processor, pulse oats until finely ground; scrape sides of bowl. Add almond flour, ¼ cup (50 grams) sugar, ¼ teaspoon salt, and cinnamon; pulse just until combined. Add melted butter, and pulse until well combined and mixture holds together when pressed, stopping to scrape sides of bowl.** Scraping the bowl early and often helps make sure each tender crumb gets evenly dispersed.

**3. Using a small measuring cup or bottom of a glass cup, press crumb mixture into bottom of prepared pan.** It should be a tight fit, with no loose crumbs lingering.

**4. Bake until lightly golden, set, and fragrant, 20 to 25 minutes. Let cool on a wire rack for 30 minutes.**

Baking your crust beforehand will help create a sealed barrier between crust and filling, sidestepping the soggy bottom issue.

**5. Wrap bottom and sides of pan in a double layer of heavy-duty foil; place in a large oven bag, tucking ends so bag is flush with top edge of pan.** The foil will protect your cheesecake from uneven amounts of heat, and the oven bag acts as an added barrier between the water bath and the springform pan.

# FILLING STATION

Nail that creamy cheesecake filling



1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat cream cheese at medium speed until smooth and creamy, 1 to 2 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Scrape the sides of the bowl periodically throughout mixing. If you skip this step, pieces of cream cheese and other dairy will remain unincorporated and stick around as little globs in your otherwise perfectly smooth filling.



2. Add all-purpose flour, vanilla bean paste, remaining  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups (300 grams) sugar, and remaining  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon salt; beat at low speed just until combined. Increase mixer speed to medium-low, and beat until well combined, about 1 minute, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. All of this mixing is fairly fast and gentle in the grand scheme of things, so try not to walk away from the stand mixer during this time.



# FILLING STATION

Nail that creamy cheesecake filling



3. Add eggs, one at a time, beating just until combined after each addition. Add sour cream and cream; beat until well combined, about 30 seconds, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. If all of your eggs, sour cream, and cream are at room temperature, this mixing should be fast and easy.



4. Spray sides of prepared pan with baking spray with flour. Pour cream cheese mixture onto prepared crust. Lightly tap sides of pan to spread batter into an even layer and release any air bubbles, smoothing top with a small offset spatula if necessary. Using a wooden pick, pop and fill any air bubbles that rise to surface. Tapping the sides of the pan and using a wooden pick to pop bubbles will help ensure you have a smooth cheesecake without any pesky holes.

# THE MAGIC WATER BATH

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Learn the why and how behind our water bath bake



## THE SCIENCE

Think of cheesecake as a custard-based dish like *crème brûlée*. Heavy on eggs and dairy, the cheesecake filling needs a humid bake to keep the egg proteins from drying out or overcooking. Enter the water bath, a homemade humidifier that'll help you create the most luxuriously textured cheesecake.

## THE METHOD

After wrapping the springform pan and adding your filling, place the springform pan in a large roasting pan (a disposable one works fine). Then place your roasting pan in the preheated oven. Using a large liquid-measuring cup, pour hot water into the roasting pan to 1 inch up the sides of the springform pan.

# CRACKING THE CASE

The reasons why cheesecake cracks—and how best to avoid them



**1. Overmixing the batter.** When making your filling, overmixing can lead to incorporating too much air into the batter. Once baked, the air bubbles will burst, and the cheesecake will fall and crack. The number one reason why you'd overbeat your batter is because you're having difficulty incorporating cold ingredients. Bring your ingredients to room temperature beforehand so the batter will need minimal mixing.

**2. Overbaking.** Perhaps the jiggly center made you nervous or you accidentally forgot to set the timer, but no matter what, if you overbake your cheesecake, the egg proteins will overcook and cause cracks. Using a water bath helps the cheesecake bake at a gentle, steady temperature. Plus, you can use an instant-read thermometer to see when your cheesecake is truly ready (when it registers 150°F [66°C] to 155°F [68°C]).

**3. Cheesecake sticking to the sides of the springform pan.** As the cheesecake cools, the filling shrinks slightly, creating a tug-of-war between the filling stuck to the sides of the pan and the cheesecake center. Make sure you've properly sprayed your springform pan with cooking spray before pouring in the filling. This will keep your cheesecake from sticking to the sides.

**4. Drastic temperature changes.** You might have opened the oven door too soon, letting in a cold draft. Or once you removed your cheesecake from the oven, you were tempted to rush it into the refrigerator for the overnight chill. Either way, the shock of cold to a still-warm cheesecake causes cracks. Resist opening your oven door until your cheesecake is close to completing its baking time. After the first hour of cooling in the oven with the door ajar, let your cheesecake cool completely at room temperature—another hour or two—before putting it in the refrigerator to chill overnight.