

Pumpkin Ginger Cheesecake Bars

1 cup graham-cracker crumbs
2 tbsp finely chopped candied ginger
1/4 cup unsalted butter, melted
1 egg
3/4 cup pumpkin purée
1/2 cup packed brown sugar
1/2 tsp ginger
1/4 tsp nutmeg
1/4 tsp salt
250-g pkg regular cream cheese, at room temperature

Directions:

- Preheat oven to 350F. Line an 8-in. square baking pan with parchment paper, letting paper overhang the pan's edges.
- In a medium bowl, stir crumbs with candied ginger and butter until evenly moist. Press over bottom of prepared pan. Bake in center of oven until edges are golden, about 10 min.
- Whisk egg, pumpkin purée, sugar and seasonings. Cut cream cheese into cubes. Using an electric mixer, beat cheese into pumpkin mixture, scraping down sides of bowl if needed, until well mixed.
- Pour over warm crust. Bake in center of oven until filling is set when pan is jiggled, about 25 min. Refrigerate overnight for best results.
- Use parchment paper to lift square out of pan, then slice into bars. I used sliced pecans for a garnish. Enjoy!

Pumpkin cheesecake chocolate ganache brownies

YIELD: *one 8x8 pan, 9 to 12 squares*

PREP TIME: *20 minutes*

COOK TIME: *about 40 minutes, divided*

TOTAL TIME: *5+ hours, or overnight, for cooling*

INGREDIENTS:

Brownies

1/2 cup unsalted butter (1 stick)

6 ounces dark or bittersweet chocolate, chopped

2 large eggs

3/4 cup granulated sugar

1 tablespoon vanilla extract

1 tablespoon brewed coffee (leftover or cold coffee is okay), optional but recommended

1 teaspoon instant espresso granules, optional but recommended

pinch salt, optional and to taste

3/4 cup all-purpose flour

Pumpkin Cream Cheese Filling

1 large egg

4 ounces brick-style cream cheese, well-softened

1/2 cup pumpkin puree

1/4 cup granulated sugar

2 teaspoons pumpkin pie spice

3 tablespoons all-purpose flour

Chocolate Ganache

1 2/3 cups semi-sweet chocolate chips

1/2 cup half-and-half or cream

DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 350F. Line an 8-inch square pan with aluminum foil leaving overhang and spray with cooking spray, or grease and flour the pan; set aside.
2. **Brownies** - In a large microwave-safe bowl, add the butter, chocolate, and heat on high power to melt, about 2 minutes total. Stop to check and stir after 1

minute. Heat in 15-second increments until chocolate has melted and mixture can be stirred smooth. Allow mixture to cool momentarily before adding the eggs so they don't scramble.

3. Add the eggs, sugar, vanilla, optional coffee, optional espresso granules (neither make brownies taste like coffee and both enhance and round out the chocolate flavor), optional salt, and whisk vigorously to combine.
4. Add the flour and stir until smooth and combined.
5. Turn half the batter out into prepared pan (I draw an imaginary line down the center of the batter with my spatula while it's in the mixing bowl and eyeballing it, I pour half into pan); reserve remainder.
6. Bake for 15 minutes, or until top has just set in the center; don't overbake because pan is going back into oven. While brownies bake, prepare the filling.
7. **Filling** - In a medium bowl, add the egg, cream cheese, pumpkin, sugar, pumpkin pie spice, and whisk to combine or beat with a hand mixer until smooth, about 2 minutes on medium-high power.
8. Add the flour and stir until smooth and combined.
9. After brownies have baked for about 15 minutes, remove pan from oven and using a spatula carefully, gently, and evenly spread the filling mixture over the brownies.
10. Evenly top with reserved brownie batter, smoothing it lightly with a spatula. It's normal for it to have thickened up some. I find it easiest to add golf ball-sized dollops of batter around the pan and then smooth them together with a spatula, taking care to do so gently as to not disturb the pumpkin layer. A little messy is okay because it'll be covered with ganache.
11. Bake for about 24 to 25 minutes, or until center has just set and is no longer glossy. The toothpick test is unreliable because you're going to hit gooey pumpkin so it's better to just eyeball it. Place pan on a wire rack to cook while you make the ganache.
12. **Ganache** - In a medium microwave-safe bowl, add the chocolate chips, cream, and heat on high power to melt, about 2 minutes total. Stop to check and stir after 1 minute. Heat in 15-second increments until chocolate has mostly melted and mixture can be whisked smooth.

13. Pour ganache over brownies (it's okay they haven't cooled completely), smoothing the top lightly with a spatula and pushing ganache into the corners. Allow brownies to cool uncovered at room temp for about one hour. Cover with a sheet of foil to prevent fridge smells, and place pan in fridge for about 3 hours (overnight is best), or until sufficiently chilled for slicing. Lift brownies out using foil overhang, slice, and serve. At room temp the ganache doesn't set up much, but in the fridge it turns thicker without becoming rock solid. I prefer these brownies slightly chilled and store them in the fridge. Brownies will keep airtight at room temp for up to 1 week, in the fridge for up to 2 weeks, or in the freezer for up to 6 months.