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The Perfect Cheesecake Using Persimmon Puree

By Susie Iventosch



Persimmon Cheesecake Photo Susie Iventosch

My grandmother always seemed to know exactly when the hachiya persimmons from her backyard tree were perfectly ripe, yet not overly soft. She would peel them and toss them into a simple butter lettuce salad with a light vinaigrette. Delicious!

For more information on The Urban Farmers, please visit www.theurbanfarmers.org.

The Great Persimmon Harvest took place in Vacaville on Saturday, and The Urban Farmers of Lafayette was on hand to make sure the fruit from Charlotte Sturgeon's 810 fuyu persimmon trees did not go to waste like it did last year. Sturgeon's late husband planted the trees, and because she is not a farmer, she was unable to harvest some 100,000 pounds of fruit that rotted on the trees.

This year, in an effort to prevent that from happening again, she contacted The Urban Farmers, whose mission includes harvesting backyard fruit for the needy. Their primary focus is on hunger relief, so they joined forces with the Contra Costa-Solano Food Bank to mobilize hundreds of volunteers from local schools and other organizations to pick the fruit. (See the related article on page B5).

Although Sturgeon's persimmons are the fuyu variety, which are perfect for eating when barely soft, most baked goods that call for persimmons use the hachiya variety, which are best when super soft. The fruit is usually peeled and then pureed to add to the batter. The fuyus are more round and squat in shape, while the hachiyas are more elongated and almost heart-shaped.

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INGREDIENTS

Crust

- 1 1/4 cup pecans
- 1 1/4 cup walnuts
- 1/3 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice
- 3 tablespoons butter, melted

Filling

- 2 eight-ounce packages cream cheese, softened to room temperature
- 1/3 cup granulated sugar
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 cup hachiya persimmon puree (peel persimmons before pureeing ... can blanch in boiling water to loosen

skins)

- 3 eggs

Topping

- 1 cup sour cream
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/2 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice

DIRECTIONS

Crust

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Grease a 9-inch pie dish with butter or PAM.

Chop nuts in a food processor, until fine. Mix in a bowl with sugar, spices and melted butter. Pat into the bottom and sides of the pie dish.

Bake for 10-12 minutes. Remove from oven and cool completely.

Filling

In a large bowl, beat cream cheese with both sugars, until smooth. Stir in persimmon puree. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each.

Pour filling into cooled pie shell and bake for approximately 30 minutes, or until mostly set, but still a little jiggly in the very center.

Topping

While the cake is baking, mix sour cream, sugar, spice and vanilla. As soon as you take the cheesecake out of the oven, spread this mixture over the top and continue to bake for another 10-12 minutes.

Remove cake from oven, cool to room temperature and refrigerate for several hours, or overnight before serving.

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