

RIBBON OF CHERRY CHEESECAKE

Swirls of cherry give cheesecake new dimension



1 cup sliced almonds
1 cup graham cracker crumbs
1/3 cup butter or margarine, melted
1 (21-ounce) can cherry filling and topping
3/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons granulated sugar, divided
2 tablespoons cornstarch
1/2 teaspoon almond extract
4 (8-ounce) packages cream cheese, softened
3 tablespoons amaretto liqueur
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
3 eggs, slightly beaten

Toast almonds in a skillet over medium heat. Remove from heat; finely chop almonds. Combine almonds, graham cracker crumbs and butter in a medium bowl; mix well. Press crumb mixture evenly over the bottom and 2 inches up the sides of a 10-inch springform pan. Set aside.

Puree cherry filling in an electric blender or food processor until smooth. Pour pureed cherry filling into a medium saucepan. Combine 2 tablespoons granulated sugar and cornstarch; stir into cherry filling. Cook, stirring constantly, over low heat until mixture is thick and bubbly. Remove from heat. stir in almond extract. Set aside to cool.

Put cream cheese, remaining 3/4 cup sugar, amaretto, lemon juice and vanilla in a large mixing bowl. Beat with an electric mixer on medium speed 3 to 4 minutes, or until well mixed. Add eggs all at once; beat on low just until mixed.

To assemble the cheesecake, pour one-third of the cream cheese mixture into prepared crust. Top with about 1/3 cup cherry puree. Swirl cherry mixture into cream cheese mixture, using a knife or spatula. Repeat layers twice, ending with cherry puree. Reserve remaining puree.

Bake in a preheated 350-degree oven 60 to 65 minutes, or until the center appears nearly set when gently shaken. Cool on a wire rack. Refrigerate until ready to serve. To serve, spoon a generous tablespoon of puree on serving plate. Place cheesecake wedge on top of the puree.

Makes 16 servings.

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