



BURNT BASQUE CHEESECAKE

with poached rhubarb

At first glance, a good Basque cheesecake might look like a kitchen mishap, with its intentionally singed, caramelised top. But with a rich, creamy interior and a perfectly burnt exterior that brings a hint of smoky sweetness, its texture is luxurious being both dense and slightly molten whilst light and super creamy. This cult dessert favourite works so well with some last of the season rhubarb that's been lovingly poached.

Prep time 35 minutes, plus cooling | Cook time 55 minutes | Serves 6

For the cheesecake:

700g cream cheese
350g crème fraîche
300g caster sugar
Pinch of salt
5 Clarence Court hen eggs, beaten
2 tablespoons cornflour

For the poached rhubarb:

400g rhubarb
50g caster sugar
1 orange, juice and zest
1 vanilla pod

Heat the oven to 220°C (fan).

Line a 20cm cake tin with a piece of scrunched up baking paper which covers the bottom and up around the sides (2cm above the top of the cake tin). Then do a second sheet of paper the same, at an alternating angle to the other – this is meant to be rustic so don't worry about all the creases.

Place the cream cheese into a mixer and beat slowly, so it is smooth and creamy. Then beat in the crème fraîche until it's equally smooth. Then, add the sugar and pinch of salt and mix again. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating in after each addition and scraping down the sides of the bowl until completely silky and glossy.

Place the cornflour into a bowl and whisk it so there are no lumps, then add a spoonful of the batter to it and whisk together – then add this spoonful back into the main bowl of batter and mix again.



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Pour the mixture into the lined cake tin and then bash the tin on the work surface a couple of times to remove any air bubbles. Bake for 30-45 mins until dark brown (burnt) on the top but the middle still has a wobbly centre and looks uncooked... it will continue to cook in the tin after it is removed.

Remove from the oven and set aside to cool. To make it easier to slice, place the cheesecake in the fridge for an hour or two.

While the cheesecake is cooling you can poach the rhubarb. Turn the oven down to 180°C. Cut the rhubarb pieces into 3inch chunks, cut at an angle. Place them into a roasting tin and scatter over the caster sugar. Zest the orange and then squeeze over the juice. Cut open a vanilla pod and place this in the tray too.

Then give everything a good mix together, tossing with your hands. Cover the tray with foil and then place in the oven for 10 minutes. You want the rhubarb to be tender and soft but still holding its shape. Remove from the oven and let it cool in its tray before serving with the cheesecake. Enjoy!



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