

basque burnt cheesecake

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Basque Burnt Cheesecake

Tarta de queso de La Viña, from a bar in San Sebastián that has served the same one since 1990. It has no base, it is baked in a rough parchment liner, and it is deliberately scorched almost black on top.

Everything a [New York cheesecake](#) avoids, it does on purpose — and it is far easier, because there is no water bath, no crack to worry about, and the collapse is part of the design.

What makes it work

- **Very hot, very fast: 210–220 °C for 45–50 minutes.** The surface caramelises and burns while the inside stays barely set. This is a caramel flavour, not a scorched one — the sugars in the cheese and cream browning past the point most recipes stop.
- **A high-cream, low-flour batter.** A spoonful of flour, or none at all. The centre should be liquid-custard when hot and just spoonable when cold.
- **Crumple the parchment first**, wet it, wring it out, and press it into the tin. The folds are the shape of the cake.
- **Pull it when the middle is properly liquid.** It sets in the fridge; a Basque baked firm is just a plain cheesecake with a tan.
- **Serve at room temperature**, not fridge-cold.

Ingredients

One 23 cm springform. Serves 12.

- 900 g full-fat cream cheese, room temperature
- 350 g granulated sugar
- 6 [eggs](#), room temperature
- 500 ml double cream
- 30 g all-purpose flour
- 4 g fine salt
- 1 tsp vanilla — see [Pure vanilla extract](#)

Method

Heat the oven to **210 °C / 410 °F**. Line the tin with two sheets of crumpled, dampened parchment, letting them stand 5 cm above the rim.

Beat the cream cheese and sugar on low until smooth, two minutes. Add the eggs one at a time, still on low. Mix in the cream, then sift in the flour with the salt and mix just until it disappears. Add the vanilla.

Strain the batter through a sieve into the tin — this catches any lump and is a 30-second insurance policy.

Bake **45–50 minutes**, until the top is deeply browned, almost black at the edges, and the middle still moves like liquid.

Cool completely in the tin, at least four hours. Serve at room temperature.

Notes

- **If the top is not nearly black, it is not finished.** Trust the smell: it should smell of caramel, not of smoke.
- Every oven runs differently at the top end; if yours browns slowly, finish with two minutes under a hot grill.
- **Keeps four days refrigerated.** Bring it back to room temperature — cold, it is stiff and tastes of much less.
- A spoonful of sherry, or a slab of blue cheese in the batter, are two variations San Sebastián bars actually serve.

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