

japanese cotton cheesecake

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Japanese Cotton Cheesecake

A soufflé cheesecake: cream cheese thinned with milk and yolks, lightened with a meringue, and baked low in a water bath until it is a pale, quivering, barely sweet dome. It appeared in Japan in the late 1960s and is now a bakery standard across East Asia, usually sold whole and jiggled at the counter for the camera.

It is a soufflé that does not fully collapse, and every step is about that.

What makes it work

- **A meringue at soft peaks, not stiff.** Stiff meringue folded into a warm cheese base tears, leaving tunnels; soft peaks fold in evenly and stretch in the oven. This is the opposite of the instinct.
- **Low temperature, long bake, water bath.** 150 °C for 70 minutes in a bain marie. High heat sets the crust before the inside rises, and the cake cracks in a ring.
- **Cool inside the oven with the door ajar for an hour.** A soufflé taken into cold air deflates and wrinkles. Slow cooling costs perhaps 15% of the height instead of half.
- **Sieve the cheese base.** Any lump is a hole.
- **Cream of tartar or lemon juice in the whites.** Acid stabilises a meringue that has to survive an hour of heat.

Ingredients

One 18 cm round, 8 cm deep. Serves 10.

- 250 g full-fat cream cheese
- 60 g unsalted butter
- 120 ml whole [milk](#)
- 6 [eggs](#), separated
- 60 g cake flour
- 20 g [cornstarch](#)
- 120 g caster sugar
- 4 g cream of tartar, or 1 tbsp [lemon juice](#)
- 3 g fine salt
- 1 tsp vanilla — see [Pure vanilla extract](#)

To finish: apricot jam, warmed and sieved, for the glaze

Method

Line the tin, base and sides, with parchment standing above the rim, and wrap the outside in foil.

Melt the cream cheese, butter and milk together over a bain-marie, whisking smooth. Off the heat, whisk in the yolks one at a time, then sift in the flour and cornstarch with the salt. Whisk smooth and pass through a sieve. Add the vanilla.

Whip the whites with the cream of tartar until frothy, then add the sugar in three goes and whip only to soft, drooping peaks.

Fold a third of the meringue into the cheese base to loosen it, then fold in the rest in two additions, quickly and gently.

Pour in from a height of about 20 cm to break large bubbles. Set the tin in a roasting pan and pour in hot water to 3 cm.

Bake **150 °C / 300 °F for 70 minutes**, then turn the oven off and leave the cake inside with the door propped for one hour.

Brush the top with warm apricot glaze.

Notes

- **Some shrinkage is normal.** A centimetre off the height as it cools is correct; a wrinkled, sunken top means the oven was too hot or the door was opened.
- Matcha, cocoa or a spoonful of yuzu juice are the standard flavour variations.
- **Serve slightly chilled**, and eat within two days — the texture is the whole product and it firms up by day three.

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