

Strawberry Cheesecake Parfaits

Ricotta, which means “cooked again” in Italian, is made by reheating the whey from cheese-making. It’s lower in fat compared to many other cheeses, but packed with calcium and protein. Ricotta cheese is commonly used in Italian cheesecakes. This cheesecake cream is a delicious dip for fresh whole berries or wedges of juicy ripe peaches, nectarines, or pears.

Ricotta Cheesecake Cream:

- 1 cup part-skim Ricotta cheese
- 4 ounces (½ block) fat free cream cheese, softened
- ¼ cup granulated sugar
- 2 tablespoons fat free milk
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- ½ teaspoon finely grated lemon zest (yellow part of peel only)

Strawberry Parfaits:

- 1 pound fresh strawberries
 - 3 tablespoons granulated sugar
 - 4 graham crackers, regular, chocolate, or cinnamon
 - 4 sprigs mint, for garnish (optional)
1. To make cheesecake cream, combine Ricotta and cream cheeses, sugar, milk, vanilla, and lemon zest in electric blender or food processor. Whirl until smooth and creamy. Cover and refrigerate (can be prepared up to 2 days before serving).
 2. For parfaits, set aside 4 strawberries for garnish. Cut remaining strawberries into ½-inch pieces. In medium bowl, stir together chopped berries and sugar.
 3. Place crackers in plastic bag, seal bag and crush with palm of hand or rolling pin to coarse crumbs.
 4. In 4 parfait glasses or goblets, layer half of the berries, half of the cheesecake mixture, and half of the graham cracker crumbs. Repeat layering with remaining berries, cheesecake mixture, and crumbs. Garnish with reserved whole berries and mint, if desired.

Prep time: 25 minutes • Cook time: 0 • Makes: 4 servings

Cook's Tip:

- For a wintertime treat, layer the cheesecake cream with frozen blueberries that have been simmered with sugar and cinnamon into a thick compote, then cooled.

Tester's Comment:

“Graham crackers are what you’d expect with a cheesecake-type dessert, but I also made it with vanilla wafers. I tried the cheese sauce on top of fresh plums and apricots, and we liked that, too.”

Nutrients per serving:

Calories	253
Protein	12 g
Total Fat	6 g
(Saturated Fat	3 g)
Carbohydrate	41 g
Calcium	207 mg
Cholesterol	30 mg
Fiber	2 g
Sodium	273 mg

