

Jane-Anne's recipe for hazelnut and chocolate cheesecake

A chocolatey, nutty biscuit base, a dash of nutty liqueur and a topping of scribbled dark chocolate give this easy unbaked cheesecake a decadent touch.

For the biscuit base

5 Tbsp (75 ml) whole hazelnuts, plus extra for decorating
1 x 200 g packet chocolate digestive biscuits
6 Tbsp (90 ml/90 g) very soft butter

For the cheesecake

4 tsp (20 ml) powdered gelatine
1/4 cup (60 ml) tepid water
2 x 250 g tubs full-fat cream cheese
1 cup (250 ml) caster sugar
2 Tbsp (30 ml) Frangelico hazelnut liqueur or a similar liqueur of your choice
1 vanilla pod or 1 tsp (5 ml) vanilla extract
1 cup (250 ml) or 1 x 250 ml tub fresh cream

For the topping

75 g dark chocolate (75% cocoa solids), broken into pieces

Put the hazelnuts in a dry frying pan and toss for a few minutes over medium heat, or until lightly toasted. Wrap the nuts in a clean tea towel and rub them between your hands to remove the skins (don't worry if bits of skin remain here and there). Break up the biscuits and place them, with the cooled hazelnuts, in a food processor. Whizz to coarse crumbs, but don't over-process, which will make the chocolate sticky and the nuts oily. Place in a bowl, add the soft butter and stir well to combine. Press the mixture evenly onto the base of a non-stick 24-cm springform cake pan lined with clingfilm. Refrigerate while you make the filling.

Sponge the gelatine in the water, then melt it. Set aside to cool for a few minutes. Combine the cream cheese, caster sugar and hazelnut liqueur in a large bowl and whisk for 1 minute until smooth. Cut the vanilla pod in half, scrape out the black seeds and add them to the bowl. Stir in the warm gelatine mixture. Whip the cream in a separate bowl until it forms soft peaks. Very gently fold the cream into the cheese mixture, pour the mixture into the cake pan and chill for 4-6 hours, or until firm.

For the topping, melt the broken-up chocolate in a bowl set over a pan of simmering water. Place in a small piping bag fitted with a fine nozzle and scribble it all over the top of the cheesecake. Refrigerate for another 30 minutes, or until the chocolate has set. Carefully release the cake from the pan, slice into portions and serve with some extra toasted hazelnuts.

Makes one 24-cm cake; serves 8.