

# Make it a mousse!

## A new twist on pumpkin pie to please the taste buds

By Lisa Kivirist and John D. Ivanko

On our farm, we grow a lot of pumpkins — enough that you can find them stacked on our front porch like cordwood. After storing them for a month or two, when they are fully ripened, we shift into savor and celebrate mode. With names like New England Pie and Long Pie, these pumpkins, we have discovered, glow with flavors. We delve into preparing delicious breakfast sides, appetizers and decadent desserts with the bounty.

Over the past decade, we've explored recipes that use fresh, seasonal ingredients, in part to showcase this luscious and nutritious fruit. Our experimentation led to the development of several pumpkin recipes found in our recent cookbook, "Farmstead Chef," including one for Pumpkin Mousse Cheesecake.

Pumpkin and mousse seem like dance partners from different dessert planets. Drop a pumpkin on your toe and it will hurt. A mousse, by its culinary definition, whips air bubbles into something to make it light and fluffy. Try this recipe and you'll never return to that flat and heavy traditional pumpkin pie again. It may score some points with the in-laws over the holidays, too.

Co-authors of "Farmstead Chef" ([farmsteadchef.com](http://farmsteadchef.com)), Lisa Kivirist and John D. Ivanko also operate Inn Serendipity Bed and Breakfast and Farm in Brownsown, Wis.



Photo by Todd Welvoert / Radish

### Pumpkin Mousse Cheesecake

#### Crust ingredients:

1½ cups crushed graham crackers      ½ cup melted butter  
¼ cup sugar

#### Cream-cheese layer ingredients:

1 package cream cheese, softened      2 eggs  
(8 ounce)      ¾ cup sugar

#### Pumpkin layer ingredients:

3 eggs, separated      1 teaspoon cinnamon  
2 cups cooked pumpkin puree      1 teaspoon nutmeg  
¾ cup sugar      ½ teaspoon salt  
½ cup milk

#### Topping (optional):

1 cup whipped cream

Prepare graham cracker crust, taking about 10 graham crackers and crush them in a food processor. You can also place crackers in a plastic bag and crush them with a rolling pin. This should result in about 1½ cups of graham crackers. Keep crumbs in food processor and mix in sugar. Drizzle in the melted butter until crumbs clump together. Press into a lightly oiled 9-inch pie pan or other pan as needed.

Next, prepare the cream-cheese layer. In a mixing bowl, beat cream cheese until fluffy. Beat in eggs and sugar, one at a time, until well blended. Spread cream-cheese mixture over the crust and bake at 350 degrees for about 25 to 30 minutes or until firm. Cool completely.

For pumpkin layer, mix egg yolks with pumpkin puree and cook over medium heat in a saucepan until thickened. To that pumpkin mixture, add a half cup sugar, milk, cinnamon, nutmeg and salt. Turn off heat and let sit on burner for 5 minutes. Remove from heat and cool completely.

In a large bowl, beat egg whites until stiff. Add remaining quarter-cup sugar and beat until well blended. Fold egg whites into pumpkin mixture and pour this pumpkin layer over the cream-cheese layer. Bake at 350 degrees for 15 minutes or until set. Cool completely and chill overnight before serving. Serve with a dollop of whipped cream on top. Yields 12 servings.

*Want to make it even more homemade? Turn to Resources, page 30, for recipes for homemade graham crackers and whipped cream.*

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(Story on page 20)

### Homemade Graham Crackers

Most graham crackers you'll find on the supermarket shelves don't contain a gram of graham flour. This recipe cooks up the real cracker, based on Sylvester Graham's work back in the early 1800s to develop a "health cracker" made with self-dubbed graham flour, a combination of fine-ground white flour and coarse-ground wheat bran and germ. Apparently Graham attempted to create a cracker to suppress "carnal urges." Not sure about that part, but they definitely assist in the internal plumbing department.

2 cups graham flour	¼ teaspoon cinnamon
½ cup flour	¼ cup butter (half a stick)
¼ cup brown sugar, firmly packed	⅓ cup honey
¾ teaspoon baking powder	¼ cup milk
½ teaspoon baking soda	½ teaspoon vanilla extract
½ teaspoon salt	

In a food processor, mix flours, brown sugar, baking powder, baking soda, salt and cinnamon. Add in the butter and mix until crumbly. Add the honey, milk and vanilla and process until dough becomes a ball. Cover dough in plastic wrap and refrigerate one hour. Unwrap dough and place on lightly floured surface. Roll out dough to quarter-inch thickness. Cut with cookie cutters. Bake at 350 degrees for about 15 to 20 minutes or until edges just start to darken. Cool on a wire rack.

— *Recipe adapted from "Farmstead Chef" by Lisa Kivirist and John D. Ivanko*

### Whipped Cream

Talk about misleading advertising. "Whipped cream" that is sprayed from an aerosol can or filling those nondairy plastic tubs are neither whipped in the traditional sense, nor made with heavy cream. So make your own real whipped cream, just for the taste of it. Save some money, too. You'll be paying double the price for the store-bought stuff with mostly air and water. Be careful not to over whip your whipped cream. If the cream starts to stiffen and appears grainy, stop immediately or you'll end up with a bowl full of butter. Not that a bowl of butter is bad; it's just not the best topping for our Pumpkin Mousse Cheesecake.

1 cup heavy cream

Pour heavy cream into an electric mixer, start at a low speed until the cream gets foamy and then speed things up. You can also mix by hand using a whisk. Whisking by hand should take about 4 minutes. Serve immediately on top of apple pie, apple crisp or anything that needs a luscious, real dairy topping. Yields 2 cups whipped cream.