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December 19, 2007

CHEESECAKES NOT JUST FOR DESSERT: A NEW TWIST ON OLD FAVORITE

Ohio Poultry, Dairy Feature Ohio State Fair Winning Savory Cheesecake Recipes

COLUMBUS – Many tables this holiday season will feature delicious cheesecake as a centerpiece of the dessert menu, but cheesecakes aren't just for dessert anymore. Innovative cooks are capitalizing on the growing popularity of another type of cheesecake – the savory cheesecake.

“While sweet cheesecakes are a long-standing dessert staple, savory cheesecakes make excellent appetizers, or even lunches and dinners that can be eaten hot or cold,” said Jim Chakeres, executive vice president for the Ohio Poultry Association (OPA). “The flavor choices are endless making it a success with each family member.”

Savory cheesecakes, such as the Ohio State Fair award winning Savory Mediterranean, Turkey Reuben and Southwest Cheesecake with Chicken, are traditional cheesecakes in the sense that eggs and cream cheese are added together. However, instead of adding sugar like dessert cheesecakes, savory cheesecakes feature a variety of ingredient additions, including fresh herbs, hard cheeses or vegetables, such as sun-dried tomatoes, onions and red peppers.

The Savory Mediterranean Cheesecake recipe is one of several savory cheesecakes featured in a recipe booklet: *Champion Cheesecakes: Recipes for Every Season*, produced by the American Dairy Association Mideast and OPA. This winning recipe, using goat cheese, peppers and tomato pesto, is not only full of great taste, but it also contains many essential nutrients.

The three featured savory cheesecakes all contain at least four Ohio eggs, with each providing 13 essential nutrients and only 75 calories. In addition, the cream cheese featured in this dessert is made from milk. One serving of milk includes nine essential nutrients including calcium, potassium, phosphorous, protein, Vitamin D, Vitamin A, Vitamin B₁₂, Riboflavin and Niacin.

The dairy and poultry industries are two of Ohio's largest-producing agricultural sectors in the state. Ohio chickens produce nearly eight billion eggs each year, with an estimated retail value of more than \$600 million. Ohio's dairy industry has gross receipts of more than \$660 million, and the state is home to 274,000 dairy cows that produce 4.86 billion pounds of milk each year, ranking Ohio 11th nationally in the amount of milk produced and first in Swiss cheese production.

For more information, visit the OPA Web site at www.ohiopoultry.org or the American Dairy Association Mideast Web site at www.drink-milk.com.

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Recipes following on next page

SAVORY MEDITERRANEAN CHEESECAKE

Makes 16 servings

Ingredients

*1 (5 1/2-ounce) box seasoned croutons, crushed
1/4 cup butter, melted
2 cups goat cheese, softened
1 (8 ounce) package cream cheese, softened
4 OHIO eggs, beaten
1/4 cup cornstarch
1/2 cup sour cream
1/2 cup finely chopped onions
1/2 cup finely chopped red bell pepper
1 (7 1/2-ounce) can marinated artichoke hearts, drained and chopped
1/2 cup prepared tomato pesto
1 (2 1/4-ounce) can sliced black olives
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
1 teaspoon oregano
1/2 to 1 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
1/2 cup feta cheese crumbles*

Preheat oven to 350°. In medium bowl, combine croutons and melted butter. Press firmly on bottom and side of a greased 9-inch springform pan. Bake 8 to 10 minutes.

In large bowl, beat goat cheese and cream cheese until smooth. Stir in eggs, one at a time, and cornstarch; mix until smooth. Stir in sour cream, onions, red pepper, artichokes, tomato pesto, two tablespoons black olives, garlic, oregano and red pepper flakes; mix well. Pour into crust.

Top with feta cheese crumbles and remaining olives. Bake 45 to 50 minutes or until set.

Run a knife around the outside edge of the pan to loosen. Cool 30 minutes and serve, or chill completely. Garnish as desired.

TURKEY REUBEN CHEESECAKE

Makes 16 servings

Ingredients

*1 cup crushed rye cracker crumbs
1/4 cup dry plain bread crumbs
1/4 cup REAL butter, melted
4 (8-ounce) packages cream cheese, softened
4 OHIO eggs
1/4 cup cornstarch
1 cup thousand island salad dressing
1 tablespoon sweet pickle relish*

*1 tablespoon sugar
1 to 3 teaspoons horseradish
1½ teaspoons salt
1 teaspoon black pepper
1 teaspoon minced garlic
1½ cups finely shredded Swiss cheese
1½ cups diced cooked turkey
3 cups shredded cabbage and carrot blend
¼ cup prepared slaw dressing
Rye crackers or thinly sliced bread*

Preheat oven to 325°. In medium bowl, combine cracker crumbs, bread crumbs and melted butter.

Press firmly on bottom of greased 9-inch springform pan. Bake 10 minutes. Cool. Increase oven temperature to 350°.

In large bowl, beat cream cheese until smooth. Stir in eggs and cornstarch; mix until smooth.

Stir in salad dressing, relish, sugar, horseradish, salt, pepper and garlic; mix well. Stir in cheese and turkey.

Pour into crust. Place foil around bottom of springform pan; place in a shallow baking pan with 1-inch water. Bake 45 to 50 minutes or until center is almost set. Let cheesecake cool in oven with oven door open 30 minutes. Remove from oven; run a knife tip around edge of cheesecake. Cool. Cover and chill 4 hours.

In small bowl, combine cabbage blend and slaw dressing; chill. Just before serving, drain cabbage mixture to remove excess dressing. Garnish top of cheesecake with cabbage mixture.

Serve with crackers or bread slices if desired.

SOUTHWEST CHEESECAKE WITH CHICKEN

Ingredients

*1 cup finely crushed tortilla chips
4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
2 tablespoons olive oil
¾ cup chopped red bell pepper
¾ cup chopped yellow bell pepper
1 cup diced onions
¼ cup minced jalapenos
1 tablespoon minced garlic
2 tablespoons, plus 2 teaspoons southwest seasoning
1 tablespoon salt*

1 1/2 pounds boneless chicken breasts, diced
4 8-ounce packages cream cheese, softened
4 ounces sour cream
5 OHIO eggs
6 ounces shredded Mexican blend cheese
1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
Salsa

Preheat oven to 325°. Combine the crushed chips and butter in a small bowl; mix to blend. Press the mixture onto the bottom of a 10-inch springform pan; set aside.

In a large skillet, heat one tablespoon of olive oil. Add the bell peppers, onion, jalapeños, 1 teaspoon southwest seasoning and 1/4 teaspoon salt. Sauté until vegetables are soft, about 4 minutes. Add the garlic and set aside into a bowl. Season chicken with the 1 teaspoon of the southwest seasoning. In the large skillet, add the remaining olive oil and cook the chicken for 2-3 minutes. Remove from the heat and cool.

In a large mixing bowl, using an electric mixer, combine the cream cheese, sour cream and eggs. Fold in the cooked chicken and vegetables and the remaining 2 tablespoons southwest seasoning and salt. Pour the mixture into the springform pan. Place the pan in a rimmed baking pan on the middle rack of the oven. Bake for approximately one hour or until the middle is slightly moist. Remove from the oven and cool. Run a knife around the rim of the pan collar. Cover the cheesecake and chill thoroughly before serving. Serve with salsa.