Beet, Cocoa and Tangy Cheese Ribbon Squares

1 low 20×20 cm cake cut into 12 squares; 1 square per portion | Active 35 min | Cook 50 min | Total 285 min

Ingredients

- 180 g plain ready-to-eat canned beet, drained and blotted
- 100 g unsalted butter
- 60 g dark chocolate, chopped
- 140 g fine sugar for the cocoa batter
- 100 g beaten egg without shell for the cocoa batter
- 90 g all-purpose flour
- 35 g unsweetened cocoa powder
- 2 g fine salt
- 150 g full-fat plain cream cheese made with pasteurized milk
- 30 g fine sugar for the cheese ribbons
- 50 g beaten egg without shell for the cheese ribbons

Set out

Oven, 20×20 cm metal pan, at least 5 cm deep and 1.8 L capacity, Baking paper, Food processor or blender, Two bowls, Small saucepan, Spatula, Skewer and sharp knife, Food thermometer, Rack, Shallow lidded box and ice-packed cooler

Allergens

Milk, Egg, Wheat. Check labels and substitutions.

Make it

1. Heat the oven to 350°F (180°C). Line the pan with paper extending over two sides. Purée all 180 g drained beet until smooth. In the small saucepan melt the butter and chocolate gently, stirring; remove from the heat and let stand 5 minutes.

2. Stir the 140 g sugar and 100 g beaten egg into the warm, not hot, chocolate mixture. Add the beet purée. Fold in flour, cocoa and salt until no dry patches remain. Do not taste uncooked batter. Spread all of it in the pan.

3. In a clean bowl beat the cream cheese, 30 g sugar and 50 g egg until smooth. Spoon all the mixture into six narrow lines across the cocoa batter. Draw the skewer across the lines just three or four times to make broad ribbons.

4. Bake for 40-45 minutes, checking from 35 minutes if the pan is dark. The surface must be set, the cheese ribbons firm rather than liquid, and the center at least 165°F (74°C). A skewer should have moist baked crumbs, but no glossy raw batter. Extend the bake if either test fails.

5. Cool on a rack for 30 minutes, then refrigerate the pan uncovered until cold, allowing at least 3 hours. Once 40°F (4°C) or colder, cover it. Lift out using the paper and cut a 3-by-4 grid into exactly 12 squares. Use a clean knife between cuts.

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Bring it

Cut all twelve squares at home and place them flat in a shallow lidded box. Keep paper between the cut edges and the box walls so the soft ribbons do not smear during travel. Keep at 40°F (4°C) or colder in an ice-packed cooler and at the gathering. Count all time out of cold control during packing, transport and display together: no more than 2 hours, or 1 hour above 90°F (32°C).

Finish at the gathering

Ready to serve cold. Bring a small spatula or twelve paper dessert squares; the host needs no cutting board. Put out a small batch and retain the rest under cold control.

Make it yours

For a winter game night, offer one square as a small rich finish. For an all-year birthday buffet, serve the same twelve pieces on a bright plate; avoid adding an unplanned cream topping that changes packing and allergens.

Ingredient labels

Check chocolate and cream-cheese labels for soy and other added allergens. Plain beet is specified; pickled beet changes both flavor and liquid.

A useful detail

Allow 25 minutes before baking, up to 45 minutes in the oven, 30 cooling and 180 chilling:280 minutes; 285 allows the final cutting. The 50-minute cook figure also includes about 5 minutes to melt the chocolate. The cheese makes this a chilled dessert, not an unfilled room-temperature brownie.

Another way

Replace the 60 g dark chocolate with 60 g plain milk chocolate; the batch will be sweeter, and milk and possible soy must be checked on that label.

For a less earthy base, use 120 g drained beet and 60 g drained ready-to-eat canned pear, puréed together. Keep all other weights and the chilled handling plan.

Keep it well

Keep covered at 40°F (4°C) or below for up to 3 days. Refrigerate within 2 hours of baking, or 1 hour above 90°F (32°C). Cut and lift only with clean utensils. Freeze well-wrapped cold squares for up to 1 month for quality; thaw covered in the refrigerator.