VANILLAGOODS BAKING ACADEMY · CAKES & CUPCAKES

Course workbook

Cheesecake Masterclass

Baked, no-bake and Basque



Intermediate · 5 video lessons · 41 minutes of video · Notes, quizzes and a practice log

By the end you'll be able to

- Bake a crack-free New York cheesecake
- Make a no-bake cheesecake that sets
- Finish with sauces and toppings

Inside

Start here: how to use this workbook and your lesson plan 2
Lesson 1 · New York cheesecake 3
Lesson 2 · Water baths and preventing cracks 5
Lesson 3 · No-bake cheesecake 7
Lesson 4 · Basque burnt cheesecake 9
Lesson 5 · Cheesecake toppings and sauces 11
Answer key 13
Key points from every lesson, and what to do next 14

Lesson videos by COOKING WITH SHEREEN, Everyday Food, Tasty, Nino's Home and Preppy Kitchen, watched on YouTube from the course page.

This workbook belongs to _____

Free course: **vanillagoods.com/pages/baking-course/cheesecake-masterclass**

November 2026

START HERE

How to use this workbook

This workbook goes with the free video course **Cheesecake Masterclass** on vanillagoods.com. Watch each lesson there, then use these pages to keep what you learned and to track what you have practised.

1

Watch

Open the lesson page and watch the creator's video. Jot quick notes on the lined space as you go.

2

Read and tick

Read the VanillaGoods notes, then tick each key point once you can explain it in your own words.

3

Check and practise

Answer the three questions, compare with the answer key on page 13, then log your bake.

Your lesson plan

	LESSON	VIDEO	WATCHED	QUIZ	PRACTISED
1	**New York cheesecake** Video by COOKING WITH SHEREEN	5 min	☐	☐	☐
2	**Water baths and preventing cracks** Video by Everyday Food	16 min	☐	☐	☐
3	**No-bake cheesecake** Video by Tasty	6 min	☐	☐	☐
4	**Basque burnt cheesecake** Video by Nino's Home	6 min	☐	☐	☐
5	**Cheesecake toppings and sauces** Video by Preppy Kitchen	8 min	☐	☐	☐

Tools you'll see

9-inch springform pan · Stand mixer · Silicone spatula · Food processor · Gooseneck kettle · Oven thermometer · Paring knife · Hand mixer · Offset spatula · Unflavored gelatin · Parchment paper · Blender · Cooling rack · Saucepan · Balloon whisk · Fine-mesh strainer · Pint jars

Any brand works. The lessons show what each tool is for.

Keep track online too

On each lesson page, "Mark complete" saves your progress in your browser, with no account. Finish every lesson and the course page lets you print a free certificate of completion.

New York cheesecake

Video by **COOKING WITH SHEREEN**: *"Creamy Cheesecake Recipe - NO CRACKS. FOOLPROOF"*

vanillagoods.com/pages/baking-lesson/cheesecake-masterclass-1-new-york-cheesecake

A dense, creamy New York cheesecake: room-temperature ingredients, gentle mixing, a low oven and a slow cool.

Key points

- [ ] Room-temperature cream cheese mixes without lumps
- [ ] Mix on low; beaten-in air makes the cake puff, then crack
- [ ] Pull it while the center still wobbles, then cool slowly

What makes it New York style

New York cheesecake is rich and dense: full-fat brick cream cheese, sugar, eggs and a little sour cream or heavy cream on a crumb crust. The texture comes from gentle handling. The batter should be smooth and heavy, never fluffy.

Step by step

- Bring cream cheese, eggs and sour cream to room temperature
- Beat the cream cheese and sugar on low until smooth, scraping the bowl often
- Add the eggs last, one at a time, mixing just until each disappears
- Bake low, about 300–325°F (150–160°C), until the edges are set and the center 2–3 inches still wobbles
- Turn the oven off, crack the door and leave the cake inside for 1 hour

Watch for

The center looks underdone when the cake is ready; it firms as it cools. Chill at least 6 hours, or overnight, before slicing. Cut with a knife dipped in hot water and wiped dry between slices, and keep the cheesecake refrigerated.

TOOLS IN THIS LESSON: 9-inch springform pan · Stand mixer · Silicone spatula · Food processor

NOTES WHILE YOU WATCH

✓ Check yourself

Three quick questions from this lesson. Mark your answers, then compare with the answer key on page 13.

1 Why mix cheesecake batter on low speed?

- (A) To keep air out, so the cake does not puff and crack
- (B) To keep the batter cold
- (C) To save time

2 When is the cheesecake ready to come out?

- (A) When a knife comes out clean
- (B) When the top is dark brown
- (C) When the edges are set and the center still wobbles

3 How long should it chill before slicing?

- (A) 30 minutes
- (B) At least 6 hours, or overnight
- (C) No chilling is needed

Practice log

Practice is where the lesson sticks. Note what you made and what you would do differently.

WHAT I MADE	DATE AND HOW IT WENT
	☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

WHAT WENT WELL

WHAT I'D CHANGE NEXT TIME

Water baths and preventing cracks

Video by **Everyday Food**: *"The Best Technique for Classic Cheesecake | Tips for a Light and Creamy Recipe | Kitchen Conundrums"*

vanillagoods.com/pages/baking-lesson/cheesecake-masterclass-2-water-baths-and-preventing-cracks

How a water bath protects a cheesecake, how to keep the water out of the pan, and every other cause of cracks.

Key points

- [ ] A water bath keeps the heat gentle and the oven humid
- [ ] Wrap the springform in two layers of heavy foil
- [ ] Cracks come from overbaking, beaten-in air and fast cooling

Why a water bath works

Water cannot get hotter than 212°F (100°C), so a pan sitting in hot water bakes gently and evenly from the sides. The steam also keeps the surface moist and stretchy. The result is a creamy edge-to-center texture and a smooth top.

Setting it up

- Wrap the outside of the springform in two layers of heavy-duty foil, or set it inside a slightly larger cake pan
- Place it in a roasting pan and slide the oven rack partway out
- Pour in hot water from a kettle until it comes about 1 inch up the side
- After baking, lift the cheesecake out of the water before it cools on the counter

Other causes of cracks

- Overbaking: the edges should be set while the center still wobbles
- Air in the batter: mix on low and add the eggs last
- Sticking: run a thin knife around the edge soon after baking, so the cake can shrink freely
- Cooling too fast: leave it in the turned-off oven with the door cracked for an hour
- If a crack appears anyway, cover it with fruit, sour cream topping or sauce

TOOLS IN THIS LESSON: 9-inch springform pan · Gooseneck kettle · Oven thermometer · Paring knife

NOTES WHILE YOU WATCH

✓ Check yourself

Three quick questions from this lesson. Mark your answers, then compare with the answer key on page 13.

1 Why does a water bath bake a cheesecake gently?

- (A) Water adds flavor
- (B) Water cannot get hotter than 212°F (100°C)
- (C) Water makes the crust crisp

2 How do you keep water out of a springform pan?

- (A) Grease the outside
- (B) Bake it upside down
- (C) Wrap it in two layers of heavy foil or set it in a larger pan

3 Why run a knife around the edge soon after baking?

- (A) So the cake can shrink without tearing
- (B) To check if it is done
- (C) To let steam into the crust

Practice log

Practice is where the lesson sticks. Note what you made and what you would do differently.

WHAT I MADE	DATE AND HOW IT WENT
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WHAT WENT WELL

WHAT I'D CHANGE NEXT TIME

No-bake cheesecake

Video by **Tasty**: *"4 Easy No-Bake Cheesecake"*

vanillagoods.com/pages/baking-lesson/cheesecake-masterclass-3-no-bake-cheesecake

A no-bake cheesecake that slices cleanly: what makes it set without eggs, how to whip the cream, and how long it really needs to chill.

Key points

- [ ] Whipped cream, or gelatin, sets the filling instead of eggs
- [ ] Use full-fat brick cream cheese and cold heavy cream
- [ ] Chill at least 6–8 hours; overnight is best

What makes it set

With no eggs and no oven, the structure comes from fat and air: cream whipped to stiff peaks is folded into a smooth cream cheese base. Some recipes add gelatin for a firmer slice. Low-fat cream cheese or half-whipped cream gives a filling that never firms up.

Step by step

- Press the crumb crust firmly into the pan and chill it while you make the filling
- Beat room-temperature cream cheese with powdered sugar until completely smooth
- Add lemon juice and vanilla; the acid brightens the flavor and helps the filling firm
- Whip cold heavy cream to stiff peaks in a separate bowl
- Fold the cream into the base in two additions, spread into the crust and chill

Watch for

If a recipe uses gelatin, sprinkle it over cold water for 5 minutes, warm it gently until clear, and mix it in while the base is at room temperature so it does not form strings. Give the cheesecake 6–8 hours in the fridge; 30 minutes in the freezer before slicing gives the cleanest cut.

TOOLS IN THIS LESSON: 9-inch springform pan · Hand mixer · Offset spatula · Unflavored gelatin

NOTES WHILE YOU WATCH

✓ Check yourself

Three quick questions from this lesson. Mark your answers, then compare with the answer key on page 13.

1 What sets a no-bake cheesecake?

- (A) Eggs
- (B) Flour
- (C) Whipped cream folded into the base, sometimes with gelatin

2 How far should the cream be whipped?

- (A) To stiff peaks
- (B) Just until frothy
- (C) Until it turns to butter

3 How long does it need to chill?

- (A) 1 hour
- (B) At least 6–8 hours
- (C) 15 minutes

Practice log

Practice is where the lesson sticks. Note what you made and what you would do differently.

WHAT I MADE	DATE AND HOW IT WENT
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WHAT WENT WELL

WHAT I'D CHANGE NEXT TIME

Basque burnt cheesecake

Video by **Nino's Home**: *"Basque Burnt Cheesecake [Super Creamy & Easy]"*

vanillagoods.com/pages/baking-lesson/cheesecake-masterclass-4-basque-burnt-cheesecake

The crustless cheesecake that breaks the rules: a very hot oven, a deeply browned top and a center left soft on purpose.

Key points

- [ ] No crust and no water bath
- [ ] Bake hot, about 400–425°F (200–220°C), until deeply browned
- [ ] The center should still jiggle when it comes out

Why it is different

Basque cheesecake is baked hot and fast, so the outside caramelizes almost to burnt while the inside stays creamy. Cracks and a sunken middle are part of the look. There is no crust; a collar of crumpled parchment holds the batter and gives the cake its rustic edge.

Step by step

- Line the pan with two overlapping sheets of parchment that rise about 2 inches above the rim
- Beat or blend cream cheese, sugar, eggs, heavy cream and a little flour until smooth
- Pour into the lined pan and bake on the middle rack at 400–425°F (200–220°C)
- Bake 40–55 minutes, until the top is very dark brown and the center still jiggles
- Cool completely in the pan; the cake rises, then sinks as it cools

Watch for

Trust the jiggle: the center looks unset when the cake is ready. Served at room temperature the middle is soft and custardy; after a night in the fridge it is firmer and easier to slice. If the top browns before the time is up, move the cake down a rack instead of lowering the heat a lot.

TOOLS IN THIS LESSON: 9-inch springform pan · Parchment paper · Blender · Cooling rack

NOTES WHILE YOU WATCH

✓ Check yourself

Three quick questions from this lesson. Mark your answers, then compare with the answer key on page 13.

1 How is Basque cheesecake baked?

- (A) Low and slow in a water bath
- (B) Hot and fast, with no water bath
- (C) On the stovetop

2 What lines the pan?

- (A) Crumpled parchment that rises above the rim
- (B) A graham cracker crust
- (C) Foil pressed flat

3 The cake sinks as it cools. What does that mean?

- (A) It was underbaked and is ruined
- (B) The oven was too cool
- (C) Nothing is wrong; it is expected

Practice log

Practice is where the lesson sticks. Note what you made and what you would do differently.

WHAT I MADE	DATE AND HOW IT WENT
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WHAT WENT WELL

WHAT I'D CHANGE NEXT TIME

Cheesecake toppings and sauces

Video by **Preppy Kitchen**: *"EASY Caramel Recipe"*

vanillagoods.com/pages/baking-lesson/cheesecake-masterclass-5-cheesecake-toppings-and-sauces

Two sauces every cheesecake baker should know, a fresh strawberry sauce and a salted caramel, and when to add them.

Key points

- [ ] Simmer berries with sugar and lemon; thicken with a little cornstarch
- [ ] Cook caramel to deep amber, then add warm cream off the heat
- [ ] Add toppings after the cheesecake is fully chilled

Strawberry sauce

- Simmer chopped strawberries with sugar and a squeeze of lemon for 8–10 minutes
- For a thicker sauce, stir in 1 teaspoon cornstarch mixed with 1 tablespoon water and boil for a minute
- Leave it chunky, or blend and strain for a smooth sauce
- Cool completely before spooning it over the cake

Salted caramel

- Melt sugar with a little water over medium heat without stirring; swirl the pan instead
- Cook to a deep amber color, about 340–350°F (170–177°C)
- Take the pan off the heat and whisk in warm cream slowly; it bubbles up hard
- Whisk in butter and salt, then cool; the sauce thickens as it cools

Watch for

Hot sugar burns badly, so use a deep pan and a long whisk and keep your face back when the cream goes in. Top the cheesecake only when it is cold, and add sauce close to serving so the surface stays neat. Both sauces keep in a jar in the fridge.

TOOLS IN THIS LESSON: Saucepan · Balloon whisk · Fine-mesh strainer · Pint jars

NOTES WHILE YOU WATCH

✓ Check yourself

Three quick questions from this lesson. Mark your answers, then compare with the answer key on page 13.

1 How do you thicken a berry sauce?

- (A) Stir in a little cornstarch mixed with water and boil for a minute
- (B) Add more lemon juice
- (C) Add cold butter

2 When is the cream added to caramel?

- (A) Before the sugar melts
- (B) While the pan is still over high heat
- (C) Off the heat, once the sugar is deep amber

3 When should toppings go on a cheesecake?

- (A) Before baking
- (B) After it is fully chilled
- (C) While it is still hot

Practice log

Practice is where the lesson sticks. Note what you made and what you would do differently.

WHAT I MADE	DATE AND HOW IT WENT
	☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

WHAT WENT WELL

WHAT I'D CHANGE NEXT TIME

ANSWER KEY

Check your answers

One correct answer per question. If you missed one, the note explains why, and the lesson page has the full notes and the video.

1. New York cheesecake

1 **A** Air beaten into the batter expands in the oven, then the cake falls and cracks as it cools.

2 **C** The center looks underdone when the cake is ready; it finishes setting as it cools.

3 **B** A long chill firms the cheesecake so it slices cleanly and the texture turns dense and creamy.

2. Water baths and preventing cracks

1 **B** The water holds the sides of the pan at a steady, gentle temperature, so the custard bakes evenly.

2 **C** Springform pans leak, so foil or a second pan keeps the water away from the crust.

3 **A** A cheesecake shrinks as it cools; if it sticks to the pan, the tension tears the top.

3. No-bake cheesecake

1 **C** With no eggs or oven, the structure comes from fat and air in the whipped cream, and from gelatin in some recipes.

2 **A** Stiff peaks give the filling enough structure to hold a slice; soft cream leaves it loose.

3 **B** The filling firms slowly in the cold, so 6–8 hours or overnight gives a clean slice.

4. Basque burnt cheesecake

1 **B** It bakes at about 400–425°F so the outside caramelizes while the inside stays creamy.

2 **A** There is no crust; a collar of crumpled parchment holds the batter and shapes the rustic edge.

3 **C** Basque cheesecake rises in the oven and sinks as it cools; the sunken middle is part of the style.

5. Cheesecake toppings and sauces

1 **A** A cornstarch slurry thickens the sauce once it boils for about a minute.

2 **C** The cream goes in off the heat after the sugar reaches a deep amber; it bubbles up hard, so pour slowly.

3 **B** A cold, set cheesecake holds its toppings neatly; sauces slide and melt on a warm one.

WHEN YOU'VE FINISHED

Three things to do next

1

Mark each lesson complete

The "Mark complete" button on every lesson page saves your progress in your browser. No account, nothing to sign up for.

2

Print your certificate

Once all 5 lessons are marked complete, the course page prints a free certificate of completion with your name on it. It records what you finished; it is not an accredited qualification.

3

Bake it

Practice with VanillaGoods recipes that use what this course teaches.

vanillagoods.com/pages/recipes?q=cheesecake

NEXT ON THE LEARNING PATH

Decorated & Holiday Cookies

Intermediate · Gingerbread, royal icing, shortbread

vanillagoods.com/pages/baking-course/decorated-cookies

Free guide for this course: “Cheesecake troubleshooting card”, Cracks, weeping, soggy crusts and sinking, each with its fix. Get it from the course page.

Baking with real vanilla? VanillaGoods keeps Madagascar, Uganda and Tahiti vanilla in stock, along with coffee and tea, at vanillagoods.com.

✧ Key points from every lesson

1. New York cheesecake

- Room-temperature cream cheese mixes without lumps
- Mix on low; beaten-in air makes the cake puff, then crack
- Pull it while the center still wobbles, then cool slowly

2. Water baths and preventing cracks

- A water bath keeps the heat gentle and the oven humid
- Wrap the springform in two layers of heavy foil
- Cracks come from overbaking, beaten-in air and fast cooling

3. No-bake cheesecake

- Whipped cream, or gelatin, sets the filling instead of eggs
- Use full-fat brick cream cheese and cold heavy cream
- Chill at least 6–8 hours; overnight is best

4. Basque burnt cheesecake

- No crust and no water bath
- Bake hot, about 400–425°F (200–220°C), until deeply browned
- The center should still jiggle when it comes out

5. Cheesecake toppings and sauces

- Simmer berries with sugar and lemon; thicken with a little cornstarch
- Cook caramel to deep amber, then add warm cream off the heat
- Add toppings after the cheesecake is fully chilled

The lesson videos are by independent creators (COOKING WITH SHEREEN, Everyday Food, Tasty, Nino's Home and Preppy Kitchen) and play in YouTube's own player on the lesson pages; this workbook links to them and copies nothing. Notes, key points, questions and this workbook are written by VanillaGoods for home bakers.

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