

Mini Savory Cheesecakes on Arugula or Butterhead Lettuce

When I was vacationing a few years ago in Alsace, a region in northeastern France, I was surprised to see that many restaurants featured a savory tarte au fromage, a cheese tart made with farmer cheese and eggs and cooked in a pastry shell like a quiche. I decided to make these little savory cheesecakes in small soufflé molds. Instead of lining the molds with dough, I coat them with butter and bread crumbs, so the small cakes can be turned out easily. Serving the cheesecakes on a bed of salad lends an appealing freshness and crunch to the dish and cuts down a little on its richness. These make a great lunch or brunch main course and an elegant first course for dinner.

4 First-Course Servings

Mini Cheesecakes:

- 2 teaspoons unsalted butter, softened
- 1 slice bread, processed in a food processor to make 1/2 cup bread crumbs
- 1 cup (one 8-ounce container) whipped cream cheese
- 2 large eggs
- 1/4 cup sour cream
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh parsley
- 1/4 cup crumbled blue cheese, like Stilton or Roquefort

Salad:

- 3 cups arugula or butterhead lettuce (Bibb or Boston leaves), or another tender, crunchy lettuce
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon red wine vinegar
- Dash salt and freshly ground pepper

For the mini cheesecakes: Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Generously coat four small (3/4-cup) soufflé molds with the butter. Divide the bread crumbs among the molds and coat the bottoms and sides heavily with the crumbs, pressing them onto the buttered dish so they stick.

Put the cream cheese in a medium bowl and add the eggs, sour cream, salt, pepper, and 1 tablespoon of the parsley. Mix well with a whisk and divide among the soufflé molds. Sprinkle the crumbled blue cheese on top of the cream cheese mixture in the molds. Top with the remaining 1 tablespoon parsley.

Arrange the molds on a baking sheet and bake for about 20 minutes. The cheesecakes will still be slightly wet and soft in the center. Let cool for 10 minutes before unmolding.

For the salad: Meanwhile, toss the lettuce leaves with the oil, vinegar, and salt and pepper. Arrange on four plates.

Invert each cooled mini cheesecake into one of your hands to unmold it, then turn it over so it is right side up and place it in the center of one of the plates on top of the lettuce. Serve immediately.