

## Sweet Sundays: No-Bake Coconut Kefir Cheesecake

Both Hannah and Alisa sampled the new Dairy-Free Coconut Milk Kefirs. While the strawberry and vanilla were quite tasty, the original was a bit too sharp for drinking straight up. Using her dessert expertise (she is the author of *My Sweet Vegan* after all!), Hannah developed a creation that is not only probiotic-friendly, but downright delicious ...

It was a challenge to brainstorm some dessert that would still highlight the unique flavor of the kefir, without being entirely sour itself. Quickly realizing that a baked good would only detract from its bright tartness, off went the oven, and on went the stove. Dreaming up a creamy, tangy concoction, in no time at all, I had exactly what I had been craving all along; Cheesecake. But not just any cheesecake, of course, and not even any vegan cheesecake this time. Not a speck of soy, be it in the form of tofu or faux "cream cheese" enters the picture here, and coconut kefir fills out the bulk of the dessert.

Sweetened just enough so as not to overwhelm the delicate nuances of the kefir, this is a sophisticated but simple treat that would be the perfect ending to just about any meal. You could certainly dress it up with a vibrant fresh fruit sauce or decadent drizzle of ganache, but I'm happy enough with a light border of whipped coconut creme and some toasted coconut flakes on top.

Like all no-bake cheesecakes, the texture is perhaps not what you would first expect from such a treat, but I find that it's instead much lighter and more refreshing than the traditional version. No-Bake Coconut Kefir Cheesecake Recipe by Hannah Kaminsky, author of *My Sweet Vegan* and food blogger at *BittersweetCookie Crust*: 10 Ounces Vegan Wafer Cookies\*, to Make About 2 Cup Crumbs

6 Tablespoons Margarine or Coconut Oil, Melted

1/4 Teaspoon Ground Cinnamon (Optional) Kefir Cheesecake Filling: 1 6-Ounce Container Vanilla Coconut Milk Yogurt

2 Cups Original Coconut Kefir

1 Cup Coconut Milk

1 Tablespoon Agar Agar Powder

3/4 Cup Granulated Sugar

1/4 Cup Arrowroot

1 Tablespoon Vanilla Extract

\*I used Trader Joe's Ginger Cat Cookies, but pretty much any wafer cookies (or even sandwich cookies) will work.

First, finely crush your cookies so that they're about the texture of almond meal, and mixing in the cinnamon if using. I find that a food processor helps to get a better texture, but you can also smash them in a sealed plastic bag with a rolling pin. Transfer the crumbs to a medium bowl, and stir in the melted margarine or coconut oil, making sure that you moisten all of the crumbs and leave no dry patches in the mixture. Lightly grease a 10-inch round springform pan, and press the crumb mixture into the bottom, smoothing it out evenly with the bottom of a measuring cup or glass. Place it in the refrigerator for the time being.

In a medium saucepan, combine the coconut yogurt, coconut kefir, and coconut milk. Separately, mix together the agar, sugar, and arrowroot in a small dish, being careful to evenly distribute all of the dry ingredients. This will help to prevent lumps from forming. Slowly sprinkle this dry mixture into the saucepan while vigorously whisking, until you're certain that it's all been incorporated, and there are no clumps lurking on the bottom of the pan, too.

Turn on the stove to medium heat, and whisk occasionally (but don't walk away!) as it comes up to temperature, until bubbles break on the surface and it feels significantly thickened. Turn off the heat, whisk in the vanilla, and retrieve your chilled crust. Pour the cooked filling into your springform pan, and tap it a few times on the counter to release any air bubbles and to even out the top.

Let cool COMPLETELY at room temperature before moving the cheesecake into your fridge to chill; Hastening this process will weaken the gel, and lead to syneresis. Chill for at least 3 hours before serving.

Serves 10 – 14