

The Pumpkin Dessert Decision Cards

A printable companion to Pumpkin Desserts That Actually Work

Print these cards and keep them with your baking notes. They give you the blot test, the five base ratios, the bake chart, the spice blend and the make-ahead timeline in one place, so you can build any pumpkin dessert without scrolling back through the article.

Step Zero: The Blot Test

1. Line a fine sieve with two sheets of paper towel and set it over a bowl.
2. Spread the pumpkin puree across the towel in a thin layer, no deeper than a centimetre.
3. Leave it for 30 minutes. Do not press it, and do not squeeze it.
4. Scrape the drained puree off the towel. Weigh or measure what you actually have — you will be short.
5. Discard the liquid in the bowl.

One cup of canned puree gives up two to four tablespoons of water. That is the difference between a custard slice that stands on the plate and one that weeps into the crust.

Puree Check

Type of puree	Water it holds	What to do
Canned puree, 15 oz	Moderate — about 75% water	Blot 30 minutes; no further draining needed
Home-roasted sugar pumpkin	High and unpredictable	Blot 45 minutes and re-check the consistency
Home-roasted butternut squash	Moderate, sweeter flesh	Blot 30 minutes; expect a lighter colour
Pumpkin pie filling	Not puree at all	Never substitute — it is pre-sweetened and spiced
Frozen puree, thawed	High — freezing ruptures cells	Thaw overnight in a sieve so it drains as it thaws

Formula Ratio Cards

1. Custard

Per 1 cup blotted puree: 2 eggs, 3/4 cup dairy, 1/3 cup sugar, 1 tsp spice blend. Bake to 175 F — the centre will still wobble. Covers pie, bars and tart.

2. Cheesecake

Per 1 cup blotted puree: 16 oz cream cheese, 2/3 cup sugar, 3 eggs, 1/3 cup sour cream. Bake at 325 F in a water bath to 150 F, then cool in the switched-off oven for 1 hour.

3. No-bake set

Per 1 cup blotted puree: 8 oz cream cheese, 1/2 cup sugar, 1 cup whipped cream, 1 tsp gelatin bloomed in 2 tbsp water. Chill 6 hours minimum; overnight is better.

4. Crumb cake	Per 1 cup blotted puree: 1 3/4 cups flour, 3/4 cup oil, 2 eggs, 1 cup sugar, 1 tsp soda. Bake at 350 F; stop mixing the instant the flour disappears.
5. Cookies and bars	Per 1 cup blotted puree: 2 1/4 cups flour, 3/4 cup melted butter, 1 egg only, 1 cup sugar, 1 tsp soda. Chill the dough 1 hour. One egg, never two.
6. Truffle and no-bake bite	Per 1/2 cup blotted puree: 12 oz white chocolate, 2 tbsp cream, 1 tsp spice. Chill firm, roll, then rest a day — the spice deepens overnight.

The Bake Chart

Dessert	Pan	Oven	Time
Custard pie	9 inch deep dish	350 F / 175 C	45 – 55 min
Custard bars	13 x 9 inch	350 F / 175 C	35 – 45 min
Baked cheesecake	9 inch springform, water bath	325 F / 165 C	65 – 75 min
Crumb cake or loaf	9 x 5 inch loaf	350 F / 175 C	55 – 65 min
Cookies	two lined sheet trays	350 F / 175 C	12 – 15 min
Oat bars	8 x 8 inch	350 F / 175 C	30 – 35 min

Every oven runs hot or cold. Start checking five minutes before the earliest time and trust the thermometer, not the clock.

Doneness At A Glance

- Custard pie: centre reads 175 F and wobbles as one piece when the pan is nudged.
- Baked cheesecake: centre reads 150 F, outer two inches look set, middle looks slightly underdone.
- Crumb cake: skewer comes out with a few moist crumbs, and the top springs back under a fingertip.
- Cookies: edges are set and barely coloured; middles still look soft when they come out.
- No-bake set: holds a clean knife line after six hours, and the surface no longer looks glossy.
- Bars: pulled away from the pan walls by a hair and do not jiggle when you tap the tin.

Spice Blend Card

Mix once and keep it in a small jar away from the hob. This is the ratio that makes a pumpkin dessert taste like autumn rather than like plain cake.

Spice	Per cup of puree	Jar for 8 batches
Ground cinnamon	1 tsp	8 tsp
Ground ginger	1/2 tsp	4 tsp
Ground nutmeg	1/4 tsp	2 tsp

Spice	Per cup of puree	Jar for 8 batches
Ground allspice	1/4 tsp	2 tsp
Ground cloves	1/8 tsp	1 tsp

Cloves are the loudest note in the blend and the fastest to make a dessert taste medicinal. Measure them into a spoon, never pour from the jar.

Thirty-Second Bloom

Warm the spice blend in the fat — the melted butter or the oil — for thirty seconds before the eggs or the puree go in. The spice is fat-soluble, so this one step does more for flavour than doubling the quantity.

Topping Pairing Chart

Dessert	Best topping	Skip
Custard pie	Softly whipped cream, barely sweetened	Thick icing — it buries the spice
Baked cheesecake	Salted caramel or a spoon of sour cream	More sugar on an already rich base
No-bake layer	Crushed gingersnaps for crunch	Fresh fruit, which waters the surface
Crumb cake	Nothing — the crumb is the topping	A glaze; it softens the streusel
Cookies and bars	A thin maple or cream cheese drizzle	Powdered sugar, which vanishes by day two
Truffles	A dusting of the spice blend	Chocolate coating, unless eaten cold

Make-Ahead Timeline

Up to 1 month ahead	Roast and puree your own squash, then freeze it in 1-cup portions. Thaw overnight in a sieve so it drains as it defrosts.
Up to 1 week ahead	Mix a jar of the spice blend. Toast and chop any nuts, and store them airtight at room temperature so they stay crisp.
Night before	Blot the puree and refrigerate it. Set out the cream cheese, eggs and butter so they come to room temperature.
Bake day	Bloom the spice in the warm fat, mix the batter by hand, and stop the moment the flour disappears.
Serve day	Chill the finished dessert at least four hours, then bring slices to room temperature for twenty minutes so the spice wakes up.

Storage Tracker

Dessert	Fridge	Freezer
Custard pie and bars	3 days, loosely covered	2 months, wrapped once fully set
Baked cheesecake	5 days, airtight	2 months, whole or in slices
No-bake layer	4 days, airtight	Not recommended — it weeps
Crumb cake and loaf	5 days, wrapped in parchment then foil	3 months, unglazed
Cookies and bars	5 days, airtight	2 months, interleaved with parchment
Truffles	2 weeks, in a sealed tin	3 months, in a single layer

Wrap custards and cheesecakes loosely, not tightly. A sealed lid traps condensation, and condensation is what makes the surface of a chilled pumpkin dessert tacky.

Gift Tags

Cut along the lines and tie one tag to each wrapped box or jar with kitchen twine.

Baked for you on _____

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