

Try Yasmin Khan's sour cherry cheesecake

As you'd expect, there's many a plum-coloured, tear-shaped fig in Yasmin Khan's new cookbook, *Ripe Figs*. More so though, there is strength, pain, hope, loss and heroism.

It took four separate trips to the Eastern Med – each two to seven weeks long, over the course of a year – for Yasmin to pull together the stories she shares from cooks, restaurant owners, volunteers, migrants and refugees across Turkey, Cyprus and Greece.

These encounters sit between ideas for hot yoghurt soup, Afghan spiced pumpkin and this sour cherry cheesecake.

"Sour cherries are a prized ingredient in Turkey and here I've paired the sharp, tangy fruit with a baked yogurt and cream cheese cake," says the London-based food writer.

"I use frozen sour cherries for this, as it's near-impossible to find them fresh in the UK and they have the added bonus of being ready-pitted, which saves time. You can find them in the frozen aisles of health food



shops such as Wholefoods, or in Polish or Middle Eastern delis."

"You can use sweet frozen cherries too, which are available in many supermarkets, you'll just need to reduce the amount of sugar in the topping by one-third.

"To reduce the risk of the cheesecake cracking, follow these tips carefully: don't over-mix the ingredients, be sure to line the baking tin, cook it slowly (if your oven runs hot, I'd be tempted to reduce the temperature and cook it for a little longer) and let the cheesecake cool down very slowly."

INGREDIENTS (SERVES 8)

200g digestive biscuits
100g unsalted butter, melted
600g full-fat cream cheese, at room temperature
200g strained full-fat Greek-style yogurt
200g caster sugar
3 large eggs, lightly beaten
1tbsp plain flour
1tbsp vanilla extract
1tsp finely grated Unwaxed lemon zest
1tbsp lemon juice

For the topping:

400g frozen, pitted sour cherries (see recipe introduction)
150g caster sugar
1tbsp cornflour

METHOD

1 Line a 23cm springform cake tin with baking parchment. Put the biscuits in a food processor and blitz to crumbs. Alternatively, place them in a plastic bag and hit them with a rolling pin until they are finely crushed (the latter is slightly more therapeutic).



2 Mix the crushed biscuits with the melted butter, then spoon into the prepared tin, pressing down the base to form an even layer. (I sometimes use the base of a cup or glass to even out the crumb.) Transfer to the refrigerator to set.

3 Beat the cream cheese and yogurt until smooth. Whisk in the sugar, eggs and flour, then the vanilla, lemon zest and juice.

4 Preheat the oven to 160°C/fan 140°C/Gas 3. Pour the filling into the chilled biscuit base and bake for around one hour. You can tell it is cooked when it looks set but still has a wobble in the middle. Now turn off the oven, open its door and leave the cheesecake to cool for 10 minutes without touching it. Remove it from the oven and leave to cool completely, then chill for four hours.

5 To make the topping, place the frozen cherries and sugar in a saucepan over a medium heat. Stir frequently to begin with, so the sugar doesn't catch. Once the cherries have defrosted and the sauce come to the boil, add the cornflour and simmer for five minutes. Set aside and leave to cool.

6 To serve, either spoon the topping all over the cheesecake, or slice the cheesecake into pieces and place a dollop of cherries on top of each serving.

● Ripe Figs: Recipes And Stories From The Eastern Mediterranean by Yasmin Khan is published by Bloomsbury, priced £26