Prep Time: 20 minutes | Cook Time: 25 minutes | Chill Time: 2 hours | Total Time: 2 hours 45 minutes

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A Guilt-Free Indulgence

These Carrot Cottage Cheesecake Cups are the perfect marriage of a classic carrot cake and a creamy cheesecake, but with a healthy twist. By using wholesome ingredients like rolled oats, carrots, and protein-packed cottage cheese, we've created a dessert that is not only delicious but also nourishing. The natural sweetness of Medjool dates and a touch of maple syrup means there's no refined sugar, while the warming spices of cinnamon and nutmeg evoke the comforting flavors of a traditional carrot cake.

Each cup features a nutty, oat-based crust, a silky-smooth cottage cheese filling that's been blended to perfection, and a tender, spiced carrot cake layer. Baked to set and then chilled for a refreshing finish, these individual cups are ideal for meal prep, a sophisticated yet healthy dessert, or a delightful afternoon pick-me-up. They are a testament to the fact that you can have your cake and eat it too—especially when it's this wholesome and satisfying.

Recipe Profile

- Intensity: Easy to Moderate

- Skill Level: Beginner to Intermediate. The recipe is straightforward, but it involves multiple steps (making the crust, the filling, and the carrot layer) and requires the use of a blender or food processor and a water bath for baking.
- Effort: Moderate. The active preparation time is about 20 minutes, with the rest being passive baking and chilling time.
- Flavor Profile: Warm, Sweet, Creamy, Earthy
- Texture: The cups offer a delightful contrast: a firm, slightly chewy crust, a dense and creamy cheesecake center, and a soft, moist carrot cake topping.

Ingredients

For the Crust:

- 1 cup (90g) rolled oats
- ½ cup (60g) walnuts or pecans
- 4 Medjool dates, pitted
- 1 tablespoon melted coconut oil
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- Pinch of salt

For the Cottage Cheese Filling:

- 1 ½ cups (360g) full-fat cottage cheese

- 3 tablespoons pure maple syrup (or honey)
- 1 large egg
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch (or arrowroot powder)

For the Carrot Cake Layer:

- 1 medium carrot (about 70g), finely grated
- 2 tablespoons raisins (optional)
- 2 tablespoons chopped walnuts or pecans
- 1 tablespoon rolled oats
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour (or oat flour for a gluten-free option)
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar or coconut sugar
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ¼ teaspoon baking powder
- Pinch of salt
- 1 large egg
- 1 tablespoon neutral oil (like canola or grapeseed)

Method

Step 1: Prepare the Oven and Pan (5 minutes)
Preheat your oven to 325°F (165°C). Line a standard 12-cup muffin tin with 6 paper liners. Lightly grease the liners with a non-stick cooking spray to ensure easy removal.

Step 2: Make the Crust (5 minutes)
In a food processor, combine the rolled oats and walnuts. Pulse until they resemble a coarse meal. Add the pitted Medjool dates, melted coconut oil, cinnamon, and salt. Pulse again until the mixture is sticky and holds together when pinched between your fingers. Be careful not to over-process into a paste. Evenly divide the crust mixture among the 6 muffin liners. Using the back of a spoon or your fingers, press the mixture firmly and evenly into the bottom of each liner to form a solid base.

Step 3: Create the Cottage Cheese Filling (5 minutes)
Rinse out the food processor bowl and blade. Add the cottage cheese, maple syrup, egg, vanilla extract, and cornstarch. Blend on high for 1-2 minutes, or until the mixture is completely smooth and creamy, with no visible curds. This is key for achieving a cheesecake-like texture. Pour the filling over the prepared crusts, dividing it evenly. Gently tap the muffin tin on the counter a few times to release any air bubbles.

Step 4: Prepare the Carrot Cake Layer (5 minutes)
In a medium bowl, whisk together the grated carrot, raisins (if using), chopped nuts, oats, flour, brown sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, baking powder, and salt. In a small separate bowl, whisk the egg and oil. Pour the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients and mix with a spatula until just combined. Spoon the carrot mixture gently and evenly over the cottage cheese filling in each cup.

Step 5: Bake in a Water Bath (25-30 minutes)
To ensure a gentle, even bake and prevent cracking, a water bath is recommended. Place the muffin tin inside a larger roasting pan. Carefully pour boiling water into the roasting pan until it comes about halfway up the sides of the muffin tin. This creates a moist, gentle heat environment. Transfer the entire setup to the preheated oven and bake for 25-30 minutes. The cups are done when the edges are set and the center has a slight, uniform jiggle. An instant-read thermometer inserted into the center should read 160°F (71°C).

Step 6: Cool and Chill (2+ hours)
Carefully remove the muffin tin from the water bath and place it on a wire cooling rack. Let the cups cool in the tin for 10 minutes. Then, remove them from the tin and let them cool completely on the rack. Once cooled to room temperature, transfer the cups to an airtight container and refrigerate for at least 2 hours, or overnight. This chilling period is crucial for the flavors to meld and for the cheesecake texture to fully set.

Step 7: Serve and Enjoy
Serve the cups chilled. For an extra touch, you can top them with a dollop of Greek yogurt, a sprinkle of cinnamon, or a few chopped nuts before serving.

Nutrition Information

Nutritional information is an estimate and will vary based on the specific ingredients used. Calculated per serving (1 cup).

- Calories: 295 kcal
- Protein: 14g
- Carbohydrates: 28g
- Fat: 16g
- Saturated Fat: 6g
- Fiber: 4g
- Sugar: 16g
- Sodium: 280mg