



Cheesecakes are Amie Thompson's go-to dessert – and the black-bottom, white-chocolate cheesecake is her specialty.

“I was an editor at the Great Falls Tribune for nearly 10 years before joining NorthWestern, and I was a proud member of the Birthday Fairies. One of us made a dessert for

every birthday in the newsroom, and I perfected the cheesecake during those years.”

This white-chocolate cheesecake is always a hit, and is versatile. It works to celebrate any season. Amie often makes cheesecakes for dessert auctions to raise money for charities, too, including United Way and Night Out for Science, a fundraiser at Great Falls College that raises funds for student scholarships.

“I consider myself a servant leader, and one of the more enjoyable ways that I make connections and contributions is through people's taste buds,” Amie said.

Amie, who has been with the company since 2017, is the communications coordinator for NorthWestern Energy. In addition to keeping employees up to speed on company news and events, she works to help employees connect their role to NorthWestern's overall vision.

As a certified change practitioner, she also serves on NorthWestern's largest projects to lead change.

“Change is hard for everyone, and with continued innovation to bring customers what they desire comes more and more change,” said Amie. “We all go through a lot of emotions when we experience new things. My job is to help supervisors across the company to communicate often, and accurately, to answer as many questions employees may have about changes to their jobs and our procedures.”

Amie said she enjoys working for NorthWestern because of its many employee benefits, including tuition reimbursement, which she used during the pandemic to earn a master's degree in organizational leadership from Gonzaga University. She also serves on the Great Falls Public Schools Board.



Black Bottom White Chocolate Cheesecake

INGREDIENTS

Crust

1 ¾ cups chocolate wafer cookies or OREO Thins cookies, crushed into fine crumbs

¼ cup butter, melted

Filling

2 (8-ounce) packages Neufchatel or cream cheese, softened

½ cup sugar

3 eggs

1 (12-ounce) package (2 cups) white vanilla chips, melted

1 cup whipping cream

2 tbsp. butter, melted

1 tsp. vanilla

Topping

Fresh or frozen red raspberries

DIRECTIONS

1 Heat oven to 325 degrees F. In medium bowl, combine crust ingredients, mix well. Press in bottom and up sides of ungreased 10-inch springform pan. Refrigerate.

2 In large bowl, beat cream cheese until smooth. Gradually add sugar, beating well after each addition. Add all remaining filling ingredients; beat until smooth. Pour into crust-lined pan.

3 Bake at 325 degrees for 70 minutes or until edges are set; center of cheesecake will be soft. Turn oven off; open oven door at least 4 inches. Let cheesecake sit in oven for 30 minutes or until center is set.

4 Remove cheesecake from oven. Cool in pan on wire rack for 1 hour or until completely cooled. Carefully remove sides of pan. Refrigerate at least 4 hours or overnight. Store in refrigerator.

5 Top with fresh red raspberries before serving. If using frozen raspberries, mix with some sugar, mash raspberries and make a pourable topping.

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We are proud of the diversity in the communities we serve. To better serve the needs of some of our customers, we translate important customer information into two languages: Spanish and Karenic.

Estamos orgullosos de la diversidad en las comunidades que servimos. Para satisfacer mejor las necesidades de algunos de nuestros clientes, traducimos información importante del cliente a dos idiomas: español y karenic.

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Annual pipeline inspections underway

Every year, NorthWestern Energy does leak surveys on our natural gas system. This includes gas main lines, service lines and gas meters.

In coming months, you may see crews working throughout neighborhoods carrying what's called a DP-IR (Detecto Pak-Infrared). These long, hand-held wands can detect even tiny traces of natural gas, which allows us to find small leaks and get them fixed right away.

Inspectors will need to access your property to inspect your natural gas meter. If they can't reach your meter due to a locked gate or an animal in your yard, they'll come to your door and ask for access. If they can't get a hold of someone in the house, they'll send a NorthWestern Energy employee back later, so we can be sure to get a full inspection of the natural gas system.

We contract with Heath Consultants, whose employees drive cars that are clearly marked with their logo and the NorthWestern Energy logo. They also wear yellow safety vests that identify them as a NorthWestern Energy contractor. In rural areas, you may also see inspectors on ATVs.

Pipeline safety

In addition to being in your backyard, we are inspecting and monitoring the larger pipelines that deliver natural gas to your neighborhoods and communities.

Pipeline markers

Markers, placed at all public road and railroad crossings, show the approximate location of pipelines and identify the companies that operate them. These markers indicate the pipeline content, the name of the pipeline operator and the operator's emergency phone number.

Even if the pipeline is marked, you must call 811 to have utility lines marked before digging. The pipeline may not follow a straight course between markers.

Pipeline monitoring

As a pipeline operator, we monitor the status of our pipelines seven days a week, 24 hours a day to ensure they are safe and secure. We use computers, alarms, meters and satellite technology to control and check our pipelines. The monitoring systems detect changes in pressure and flow and can activate warnings and safeguards if a leak is detected.

HCA's and IMPs

Federal pipeline safety regulations use the concept of High Consequence Areas, or HCAs, to identify specific locations and areas where an accidental release of natural gas could have the most significant adverse consequences. Once an HCA has been identified, operators devote additional focus to ensure the integrity of pipelines in that area. We have in place a Distribution Integrity Management Program, or DIMP, that defines the steps and timelines for identifying HCAs, assessing the integrity of the pipelines and taking aggressive steps to mitigate the risks to people and property near HCAs.

Pipeline purpose and reliability

Pipelines are the safest way to transport energy products, including natural gas, crude oil and other fuels. The U.S. Department of Transportation's Pipeline & Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) regulates pipelines with the help of state partners. According to government and industry statistics, the most common cause of pipeline incidents is improper or unauthorized digging near a pipeline, which is why it's important to call 811 before you dig. Pipeline operators carefully build, maintain and monitor the integrity and security of their lines.

What is natural gas?

Natural gas is an energy source that comes from microscopic plants and animals that lived millions of years ago. When these marine organisms died, they sank to the bottom of the sea and were covered by sediment. Over time, they became buried deeper in the earth and over millions of years, heat and pressure turned them into natural gas. We're now able to drill for natural gas, and we find it underground in large cracks and between layers of rocks. Natural gas is the earth's cleanest fossil fuel.



The hazards of a natural gas release

Natural gas is very safe. However, if a natural gas leak occurs, you need to be aware of the hazards. Natural gas is highly flammable and easily ignited by heat, sparks and static electricity. NorthWestern Energy makes it easy to detect natural gas leaks by adding an unpleasant rotten egg or skunk-like smell to natural gas. If you smell this odor:

- Leave the area immediately.
- Do not use phones, matches, light switches or anything else that could trigger the ignition of the gas.
- When at a safe distance, at least 300 feet away, call 911 and NorthWestern Energy.

Natural gas is lighter than air and can migrate into enclosed spaces. If you smell natural gas, evacuate the area on foot and move upwind of the leak.



Excess Gas Flow Valve Notice

If a gas service is installed to your home, you have the option to purchase an Excess Flow Valve (EFV) to be installed by NorthWestern Energy. An EFV is intended to reduce the flow of gas if the service line is severed. The valve is placed in the service line where it leaves the gas main.

An EFV will reduce the flow of gas only if the service line is severely damaged. It is important to note that an EFV will not protect you from a leak or broken line inside your home, or a small leak on the line in your yard. An example of when the valve provides protection is in the event the gas service is damaged from digging or extreme ground movement.

As required by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), we are notifying you that an EFV that meets the minimum prescribed DOT performance standards is available for installation on your natural gas service line.

The cost of installing the EFV will need to be evaluated by an engineer. If you are interested, please call our construction line at 1-83-FOR-BUILD (1-833-672-8453). Payment is required prior to installation of the EFV.