

Hazelnut Shortbread Bars

Source: Barbara Allen From Sunset Magazine

Ingredients

- 3 cups raw, skin-on hazelnuts, divided
- $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp cinnamon, divided
- 2 cups flour
- 1 cup plus 3 tbsp cold butter, cubed
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup granulated sugar, divided
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt, divided
- 7 tbsps maple syrup
- 3 tbsps packed light brown sugar

Method

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Roast hazelnuts on a rimmed baking sheet until light golden, about 18 minutes. Rub the warm nuts in a kitchen towel to remove half of skins. Finely chop $\frac{1}{2}$ cup nuts in a food processor. Reduce oven temperature to 325.
2. Put chopped nuts, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp cinnamon, the flour, 1 cup butter, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup granulated sugar, and $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp salt in a large bowl. Blend on low speed with a mixer until well blended.
3. Grease a 9-inch square baking pan, line with foil (let it hang over edges), then grease foil. Press dough evenly into bottom of pan. Bake until golden and firm, about 45 minutes. Meanwhile, very roughly chop half of remaining nuts to make 1 cup.
4. Bring remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp cinnamon, 3 tbsp butter, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar, $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp salt, the maple syrup, and the brown sugar to a boil in a small saucepan, whisking frequently. Remove from heat and stir in 1 cup whole hazelnuts and the chopped nuts (2 cups total; you may have leftover nuts). Pour over crust and spread evenly. Bake until set when pan is tilted, about 18 minutes.
5. Let cool on a rack. Lift foil with cookie to a board. Cut cookie into 16 squares, then cut each square in half diagonally.

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Chocolate Hazelnut shortbread bars: Follow directions above. After spreading nut topping on the crust, scatter 1 cup roughly chopped bittersweet chocolate on top, then bake.*

Fruity: Original recipe but stir in 1 cup tart or sweet dried cherries or cranberries into nut topping.

Notes

I used hazelnuts I found at Trader Joe's. They are not raw but are roasted and salted, I think, and best of all, they were already at least half peeled. They were a dollar more than the ones with peels, a small price to pay to avoid the discouraging job of roasting and peeling. I did put them on a tray in the oven so they would have more flavor.

Because of advice of a friend I didn't put whole nuts in the mix. She said it made it harder to cut. I roughly chopped the first cup and then even more roughly chopped the second cup. It is dandy.

I couldn't wait to try them so cut them too soon. Be patient. They will look better if you wait. Mine looks like a bear walked on them but, hey, they taste great.