

Pecan Shortbread Squares

Source: Once Upon a Chef

Ingredients

Crust

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup flour
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup cornstarch
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup powdered sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, cut into 1-inch pieces

Filling

- 12 tbsp (1½ sticks) unsalted butter
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup light brown sugar, packed
- 3 tbsp honey
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp vanilla
- generous pinch salt
- 2 tbsp heavy whipping cream
- 3 cups pecans, coarsely chopped

Method

Crust

1. Cover a 9" square baking pan with heavy duty aluminum foil. Push the foil neatly into the corners and up the sides of the pan, using two pieces if necessary to ensure it overlaps all edges (the overhang will help removal from the pan). Spray the foiled pan with nonstick cooking spray.
2. Place the flour, cornstarch, powdered sugar, and salt in the bowl of a food processor fitted with the blade attachment. Pulse a few times to mix. Add the butter and pulse until the mixture resembles coarse meal with pea-sized clumps of butter within. It will seem dry; that's okay. Transfer the mixture to the prepared pan and press firmly with your fingers into an even layer over the bottom. Refrigerate for 15 minutes. While the crust is in the refrigerator, adjust an oven rack to the middle position and preheat the oven to 350°F. Bake the crust until it is set but not browned, about 17 minutes. Set on a rack to cool. Leave the oven on.

Filling

1. In a heavy medium saucepan over medium-low heat, combine the butter, brown sugar, honey, vanilla, and salt. Stir with a wooden spoon until the sugar dissolves. Turn up the heat and boil gently for 3 minutes. Stir in the heavy cream and chopped pecans.

Assembly

1. Pour the pecan mixture over the crust (it's fine if the crust is still warm). Bake until the filling is bubbling and caramel in color, about 20 minutes. Cool completely on a rack. To cut, use the foil overhang to lift the baked square out of the pan and onto a cutting board. Loosen the foil from the edges, then cut with a sharp knife into 2-inch squares. Store the finished pecan squares in an airtight container and serve at room temperature.

FREEZER-FRIENDLY: These can be frozen for up to 3 months. After they are completely cooled, double-wrap them securely with aluminum foil or plastic freezer wrap, with the layers separated by wax or parchment paper. Thaw overnight on the countertop before serving.