

seasonal fruit cobbler bars

This recipe is a simple, make-ahead way to highlight seasonal fruit. I like to make it the night before serving, chill it in the fridge and cut the bars in the morning, or just before serving. The crust is easier to cut when cold and the filling has had time to firm up.

Don't take these bars too seriously. They are very forgiving. If your filling is too soft, well then it's a fork-situation. If you forget the eggs, don't fret, I've done that too and it works out just fine. You can opt to use a food processor to prepare the dough, but I prefer getting up close and personal with baking projects. Preparing, sharing and enjoying food is all about connection, so why not experience that connection from start to delicious? Kids can help with many steps along the way, so make the time after a trip to your neighborhood farmers market to bake these fruity-magic bars. You won't regret it.

- Inspired by a recipe from *Eating Well Magazine*,
adapted by Nicki Passarella, Story Book Farm

CRUST INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 cups ground nuts or old fashioned rolled oats, or combination of the two. (I love to mix walnuts and oats together.) You can chop whole nuts by hand, or pulse them in the food processor until they look like coarse crumbs.

2 cups whole wheat pastry flour

1/2 cup sugar

1/2 tsp. salt

1 stick cold, unsalted butter, cut into small pieces

2 eggs

1 tsp. vanilla extract

1/2 tsp almond extract (optional)

FILLING INGREDIENTS

6 cups fresh, seasonal fruit, divided

Be inspired by the seasons! Here are a few ideas for summer:

apricot-raspberry, peach-blueberry, cherry-strawberry

1/2 cup whatever juice you have around: apple, orange, if you're feeling spicy: diluted ginger juice, or just use water

1/2 cup sugar

1/4 cup cornstarch

1/2 tsp. salt

1 tsp. vanilla extract

1 tsp. grated lemon zest

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fruit cobbler bars continued

PREPARE CRUST

Combine 1 cup nuts/oats, flour, sugar and salt in a bowl.

Add butter and with a pastry cutter, two knives, or your fingertips, work the butter into the dry ingredients until well incorporated.

In a separate bowl, whisk together eggs and extracts.

Pour into butter / flour mixture and with a wooden spoon, rubber spatula, or your hands mix together until a dough forms. It's okay to have streaks of butter throughout the dough.

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Grease a 9"x13" baking dish with butter or oil of your choice.

PREPARE FILLING

Combine 4 cups of fruit, juice / water, sugar and cornstarch in a large saucepan. Choose whichever fruit is more firm. For example, cook the apricots and leave the raspberries to add off of the heat at the end.

Bring to a simmer over medium heat, stirring often to prevent sticking, until mixture is very thick, about 5 minutes.

Take off heat and stir in remaining 2 cups fruit, vanilla extract and lemon zest.

ASSEMBLY

Place about 3/4 of the dough in the prepared pan and pat into an even, 1/2" layer, pushing the dough slightly up the sides of the pan. This will prevent the fruit filling from having a chance to stick to the pan.

Mix together the remaining dough with reserved nuts/oats. This is your topping.

Spread filling evenly over dough and sprinkle on topping.

BAKING

Place in preheated oven and bake for 15 minutes.

Rotate the pan for even baking and reduce the oven temperature to 350.

Bake approximately 25 minutes more, or longer depending on the juiciness of the fruit. You'll know it's finished when a jiggle of the pan results in a jello-like jiggle; soft, wobbly but not loose. Let cool before refrigerating overnight.

SERVING

Slice into bars and serve at room temperature for an afternoon snack, slightly sweet dessert or with coffee for a breakfast on the go.

These keep in a covered container, refrigerated for about 5 days, but I doubt they'll last that long.

Ways to adapt this recipe for allergies and dietary preferences:

Substitute flour for 1-to-1 gluten free flour, I like Bob's Red Mill

Replace eggs with 1 tbsp. ground flax meal mixed with 1 tbsp. water per egg

Replace cornstarch with arrowroot or instant tapioca

Substitute butter with chilled coconut oil

Reduce sugar and/or swap it for your preferred sweetener

