

Cherry Pie Bars

RECIPE LIGHTLY ADAPTED FROM INA GARTEN



Ingredients

For the crust:

1 pound (4 sticks) butter, at room temperature
3/4 cup sugar
1/2 cup light brown sugar
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
4 cups all-purpose flour
1 1/2 teaspoons salt
1/2 cup chopped almonds
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1-2 tablespoons sugar in the raw

For the filling:

6 cups SWP cherries, thawed
3/4 cup sugar
2 tablespoons tapioca starch or cornstarch
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/4 teaspoon almond extract
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
Zest of 1 lemon
2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
Zest of 1 orange
1 tablespoon fresh orange juice

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

2. For the crust, place the butter, sugars, and vanilla in the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with a paddle attachment and beat on medium speed for 2 minutes, until light and creamy. Slowly add the flour and salt to the butter mixture, beating until combined. Scatter two-thirds of the dough in clumps into a 9x13-inch baking pan and press it lightly with floured hands on the bottom and slightly up the sides. Refrigerate for 20 minutes. Bake for 18 to 20 minutes, until the crust is golden brown, and set aside to cool.

3. Meanwhile, put the mixing bowl with the remaining dough back on the mixer, add the almonds and cinnamon, and mix on low speed to combine. Set aside.

4. Reduce the oven to 350 degrees.

5. For the filling, add your thawed and drained cherries to a pot on medium heat along with the sugar and bring to a boil. Allow that mixture to cook at a low boil, stirring occasionally, for 4-5 minutes. Stir in your tapioca or cornstarch and cook for one more minute. Then add cinnamon, zests, and juices, cook for one more minute. Remove from heat and stir in your vanilla and almond extracts.

6. To assemble, spread the cherries evenly over the crust. Pinch medium pieces of the remaining dough with your fingers and drop them evenly on top of the cherries (they will not all be covered). Sprinkle sugar in the raw over the top and bake for 25-30 minutes, until the topping is browned. Allow to slightly cool and serve warm.