

Chocolate Cherry Magic Cookie Bars

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Linda Xiao for The New York Times. Food Stylist: Yossy Arefi.

Total Time 45 minutes, plus cooling

Prep Time 10 minutes

Cook Time 35 minutes, plus cooling

Rating ★★★★★ (140)

Magic cookie bars, seven-layer bars and Hello Dolly bars are all variations on a theme: a buttery graham cracker crust topped with sweetened condensed milk, coconut, nuts and semisweet chocolate chips (sometimes with butterscotch chips thrown in, too). This version ups the chocolate factor by adding a bit of cocoa to the crust and lots of bittersweet chocolate to the topping. A sprinkle of dried cherries at the end adds a much-needed punch of bright, tart flavor, making these the perfect afternoon pick-me-up or lunchbox treat. Add a bit of flaky salt to the top to make these extra craveable.

INGREDIENTS

Yield: about 24 bars

FOR THE CHOCOLATE-GRAHAM CRACKER CRUST

1 cup/225 grams unsalted butter, melted, plus more for greasing the pan

1½ cups/184 grams graham cracker crumbs (from 12 full sheets)

PREPARATION

Step 1

Heat oven to 350 degrees. Brush a 9-by-13-inch metal baking pan with butter, then line the pan with a piece of parchment paper that hangs over the two long sides.

Step 2

In a medium bowl, combine the graham cracker crumbs, cocoa, brown sugar and salt. Add the melted butter and stir until evenly moistened. The mixture will be very buttery. Transfer the mixture to the prepared pan and, using a rubber spatula, spread evenly

½ cup/ 40 grams cocoa powder
⅓ packed cup/67 grams light
brown sugar
1 teaspoon kosher salt (such as
Diamond Crystal)

FOR THE TOPPING

1 (14-ounce) can sweetened
condensed milk
1 cup/60 grams sweetened flaked
coconut
1 cup/110 grams chopped pecans
1½ cups/255 grams bittersweet
chocolate chips or chopped
bittersweet chocolate
1¼ cups/140 grams dried tart
cherries
Flaky salt, for sprinkling (optional)

and firmly into the pan. Bake until fragrant and set, 12 to 15
minutes.

Step 3

While the crust is fresh out of the oven, gently spread the
sweetened condensed milk evenly across the surface, being
careful not to pull up the crust as you spread. Sprinkle the
coconut, pecans and chocolate on top. Return the pan to the oven
and bake until coconut begins to turn golden, about 20 minutes.

Step 4

Immediately after the pan comes out of the oven, sprinkle the
cherries over the top and press them in gently. Sprinkle with flaky
salt, if using, and let cool completely (about 2 hours).

Step 5

Using the parchment paper, lift the magic cookie out of the pan to
slice into bars with a sharp, heavy knife. If the chocolate is tacky,
firm it up in the fridge for a few minutes before slicing.

Private Notes

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