

CHERRY CHOCOLATE OATMEAL BARS, WITH TOASTED COCONUT

INGREDIENTS

for the cherry filling

- 1 cup pitted bing cherries, cut into quarters
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 2/3 cup sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 tablespoon corn starch mixed with 2 tablespoons cold water

- 1 1/2 cups sweetened flaked coconut
- 1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 3/4 cup packed light brown sugar
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 1/2 sticks (3/4 cup) cold unsalted butter, cut into pieces
- 1 1/2 cups old-fashioned oats
- 1 cup cherry filling
- 6 ounces semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 1 tablespoon butter

DIRECTIONS

First, make your cherry filling as it should be completely cooled before you use it in the bars. In a medium sauce pan over medium heat, combine cherries, lemon juice, sugar and salt. Let come to a boil and then simmer 5 minutes, until the cherries are soft. Add vanilla, then the corn starch slurry. Let return to a rolling boil to start thickening, stirring all the while. Once the mixture starts to thicken (usually just a minute or two), remove from the heat and set aside. (Note: this can be made up to 3 days in advance and refrigerated.)

Preheat oven to 375F. Make a foil sling for your 13 x 9 inch pan. Spray with nonstick cooking spray.

Spread coconut evenly on a baking sheet (not the prepared pan) and toast in middle of oven, stirring once, until golden, about 8 minutes, then cool.

Blend together flour, sugars, and salt in a food processor, then add butter and blend until a dough begins to form. Transfer to a bowl and knead in oats and half of the toasted coconut until combined well.

Reserve 1/2 cup dough, then press remainder evenly into bottom of the prepared 13 x 9 inch baking pan and spread the cooled cherry mixture over it. Crumble reserved dough evenly over jam, then sprinkle with remaining half of the toasted coconut.

Bake in a middle of oven until golden, 20 to 25 minutes, then cool completely in pan on a rack. Once the bars are completely cooled, melt chocolate chips and butter in a metal bowl over simmering water (or a double boiler). Once completely melted, drizzle chocolate over the bars. Let cool and harden, at least 2 hours. Remove the bars with the foil sling and cut into 24 squares.