

Peanut Butter Chocolate Oat Bars

Ingredients

Rolled oats	1½ cups	Mexican vanilla	¾ tsp.
1:1 GF flour	¼ cup	Creamy peanut butter	1 cup + 1 Tbsp.
Salted butter	11 Tbsp.	Powdered sugar	1¾ cups
Brown sugar	¼ cup	Semi-sweet chocolate chips	¾ cup
Honey	1 Tbsp.	Dark chocolate chips (60–70%)	¼ cup
Fine salt	¼ tsp.	Honey roasted peanuts, chopped	⅓ cup
Ground cinnamon	¼ tsp.		

Oat Crust

Preheat oven to 325°F — Line 8-inch \times 8-inch pan with parchment paper, leaving overhang on two sides — Bring 6 Tbsp. **butter** to room temperature for filling

1. In *Medium Bowl #1*, whisk together 1½ cups **rolled oats**, ¼ cup **GF flour**, ¼ cup **brown sugar**, ¼ tsp. **salt**, and ¼ tsp. **cinnamon**. Add 5 Tbsp. melted **butter**, 1 Tbsp. **honey**, and ¼ tsp. **Mexican vanilla**. Stir until evenly combined and mixture holds together when pressed.
2. Press mixture firmly and evenly into the prepared pan, using the bottom of a measuring cup or glass to compact into a uniform layer.
3. Bake at 325°F for 12–15 minutes until edges are lightly golden and crust is fragrant. Remove from oven and let cool completely in pan, about 30 minutes.

Peanut Butter Filling

1. In *Medium Bowl #2*, combine 1 cup **peanut butter** and 6 Tbsp. softened **butter**. Beat with a spatula or hand mixer until smooth and creamy.
2. Add 1¾ cups **powdered sugar** and ½ tsp. **Mexican vanilla**. Mix until fully incorporated and smooth, scraping down sides as needed.
3. Spread filling evenly over the cooled **oat crust**, using an offset spatula or the back of a spoon to create a smooth, level layer.
4. Refrigerate for 30 minutes until filling is firm to the touch.

Chocolate Topping

1. In *Medium Bowl #3*, combine $\frac{3}{4}$ cup **semi-sweet chocolate chips**, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup **dark chocolate chips**, and 1 Tbsp. **peanut butter**.
2. Microwave *Medium Bowl #3* in 30-second intervals, stirring after each, until chocolate is melted and smooth. Alternatively, melt in a double boiler over barely simmering water.
3. Pour melted **chocolate** over the chilled **peanut butter** layer, spreading evenly to the edges with an offset spatula.
4. Immediately sprinkle **honey roasted peanuts** (*Small Bowl #2*) evenly over the **chocolate**, pressing gently so they adhere.
5. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour until chocolate is fully set.

Cutting and Serving

1. Use parchment overhang to lift bars from pan onto a cutting board.
2. Let stand at room temperature for 5 minutes before cutting—this prevents chocolate from cracking.
3. Using a sharp knife, cut into 16 squares (4×4 grid), wiping blade clean between cuts for neat edges.

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Equipment Required

- 8×8-inch baking pan
- Parchment paper
- Medium mixing bowls (3)
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Flat-bottomed measuring cup or glass (for pressing crust)
- Offset spatula or butter knife
- Rubber spatula
- Sharp knife for cutting
- Cutting board

Mise en Place

- *Medium Bowl #1* — oat crust mixture: $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups oats, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup GF flour, 5 Tbsp. melted butter, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup brown sugar, 1 Tbsp. honey, $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. salt, $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. cinnamon, $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. Mexican vanilla
- *Medium Bowl #2* — peanut butter filling: 1 cup peanut butter, 6 Tbsp. softened butter, $1\frac{3}{4}$ cups powdered sugar, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. Mexican vanilla
- *Medium Bowl #3* — chocolate topping: $\frac{3}{4}$ cup semi-sweet chips, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup dark chips, 1 Tbsp. peanut butter
- *Small Bowl #2* — $\frac{1}{3}$ cup chopped honey roasted peanuts
- Bring 6 Tbsp. butter to room temperature for filling while crust bakes and cools
- Line pan with parchment before starting

Ingredient Tips

- Use old fashioned rolled oats—quick oats become pasty; steel-cut won't bind
- 1:1 GF flour (Bob's Red Mill or King Arthur Measure for Measure) provides structure; regular all-purpose flour works equally well if gluten is not a concern
- Standard creamy peanut butter (Jif, Skippy) works best; natural peanut butter with oil separation may not set properly
- Salted butter throughout adds flavor depth; no additional finishing salt needed
- Semi-sweet and dark chocolate blend provides richness without excessive sweetness
- Honey roasted peanuts add sweetness, salt, and textural contrast—chop coarsely for visible pieces
- Sift powdered sugar if lumpy for smoothest filling

Preparation Tips

- Press oat crust firmly and evenly—the honey and flour help it hold together, but loose spots will still crumble
- Cool crust completely before adding filling; warm crust will melt the filling unevenly
- Peanut butter filling should be thick but spreadable—if too stiff, let butter soften more
- Chill filling until firm before adding chocolate; soft filling causes chocolate to sink
- Don't overheat chocolate—stir frequently and remove as soon as smooth
- Add 1 Tbsp. peanut butter to chocolate for authentic Reese's flavor and easier cutting
- Press peanuts gently into chocolate before it sets
- Let bars temper at room temperature before cutting to prevent chocolate cracking
- Wipe knife between cuts for clean edges

Make Ahead & Storage

- Store covered in refrigerator for up to 1 week
- Bars are best served slightly chilled or at cool room temperature
- For room temperature serving, let stand 10–15 minutes after removing from refrigerator
- Can be frozen in airtight container for up to 2 months
- Thaw frozen bars in refrigerator overnight
- Layer bars between parchment when stacking for storage

Serving Suggestions

- Serve as a rich dessert or sweet snack
- Pairs well with cold milk, coffee, or vanilla ice cream
- Cut into smaller pieces (5×5 grid = 25 pieces) for party bites
- Excellent for potlucks, bake sales, and gift giving
- Store at room temperature for softer texture, refrigerate for firmer, snappier chocolate