

# 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  $325^{\circ}\text{F}$  — Line 8-inch×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  $325^{\circ}\text{F}$  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.

## 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: 1½ cups **oats**, ¼ cup **GF flour**, 5 Tbsp. melted **butter**, ¼ cup **brown sugar**, 1 Tbsp. **honey**, ¼ tsp. **salt**, ¼ tsp. **cinnamon**, ¼ tsp. **Mexican vanilla**
- *Medium Bowl #2* — **peanut butter** filling: 1 cup **peanut butter**, 6 Tbsp. softened **butter**, 1¾ cups **powdered sugar**, ½ tsp. **Mexican vanilla**
- *Medium Bowl #3* — **chocolate** topping: ¾ cup **semi-sweet chips**, ¼ cup **dark chips**, 1 Tbsp. **peanut butter**
- *Small Bowl #2* — ⅓ 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