

Some Homemad Heaven

Homemad Granola Easy To Create And So Much Better Than Store-Bought

BY SHARON K. GHAG
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Making granola bars is easier than making cookies. There's no butter and sugar to cream, so there's no need for a mixer or bringing butter and eggs to room temperature.

Homemad granola bars have no additives, no preservatives, no artificial flavors or colors and no unpronounceable ingredients — just whole grain oats, nuts, seeds and dried fruit.

They're a guilty pleasure without a lot of guilt because you control the sugar. They're also easy to grab when you're on the go because they hold their shape.

Steel-cut oatmeal in the cinnamon and berry granola bars creates a sturdy bar that crumbles in the mouth into smaller pieces that deliver a satisfying chew. The sugar takes a back seat to the toasted flavor of the oatmeal.

The apricot, pistachio and almond flapjacks are also light on the sugar and hard in texture. The bars are dry-tasting with bits of hard apricots that provide a nice tart finish to the mellow flavor of old-fashioned oatmeal.

The granola bars from "America's Text Kitchen" are made with old-fashioned oatmeal, some of which is ground into a flour. These bars are sweet — almost dessert-like — and melt in your mouth. Replace olive oil with butter for a distinctive taste that's hard to beat.

The granola rounds are the sweetest of the bunch. Quick-cook oatmeal gives them a soft and chewy texture, and the added egg ensures they hold their shape and don't crumble.

All three recipes can be customized to suit your taste: Use different types of oats, vary the amount of nuts and seeds and dried fruit, add cinnamon. Change up the sugar and the shortening; corn syrup will produce a sturdier bar and butter adds an unmistakable flavor. You can even try a combination of corn syrup and marshmallows. Use dried dates for added sweetness.

Don't skimp on the nuts and seeds, though. They give the granola bars an added layer of flavor.

For all but the granola rounds, heat all the wet ingredients before mixing into the dry ingredients to give the bars a running start in coming together.

Two of the recipes don't require coconut. Do yourself a favor and add it. Shredded coconut gives granola an unmistakable texture and taste.

CINNAMON AND BERRY GRANOLA BARS

Makes 12 bars
Ingredients:
7 tablespoons butter, plus extra for greasing
7 cups steel-cut oatmeal
3/4 cup sunflower seeds
1/3 cup sesame seeds
1/2 cup chopped walnuts

3 tablespoons honey
3/4 cup light brown sugar
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
3/4 cup dried cranberries, cherries or blueberries, or a mixture
Instructions:
Preheat the oven to 325 degrees. Butter and line the base of a 7-by-10-inch pan.

Mix the oats, seeds and nuts in a roasting tin and toast them in the oven for 5 to 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, put the butter, honey and sugar in a saucepan and stir until the butter has melted. Add the oat mixture, cinnamon and dried fruit and mix until the oats are well coated.

Tip the mixture into the tin, press down lightly and bake in the oven for 30 minutes. Leave to cool in the tin, then carefully remove and cut into 12 bars.

Note: You can use any dried berries you wish. Vanilla extract can be substituted for the cinnamon.

This recipe is from "Clodagh's Kitchen Diaries: Delicious Recipes Throughout the Year," by Clodagh McKenna (Kyle Books, \$27.95).

GRANOLA ROUNDS

Serves 12
Ingredients:
1 1/2 cups quick-cooking rolled oats
1/2 cup each almond flour, ground flaxseed, walnuts
1/4 cup sunflower seeds
1/2 cup each dried blueberries and dried cranberries
1/3 cup unsweetened dried coconut
1/2 teaspoon each ground cinnamon and salt
1/4 teaspoon ground allspice
1 large egg
2/3 cup honey
1/4 cup oil
1 teaspoon vanilla and 1/2 teaspoon almond extract
Instructions:
Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a large bowl, stir together oats, almond flour, flax seeds, walnuts, sunflower seeds, blueberries, cranberries, coconut, cinnamon, salt and allspice.

In a separate bowl, lightly beat the egg and stir in the honey, oil, vanilla extract and almond extract. Add wet ingredients to dry ingredients and stir until everything is moist. Divide mixture among 12 medium muffin cups and pack down tightly. Bake until the edges begin to brown, about 20 minutes. Let cool for several minutes before unmolding.

This recipe is from "Muffin Tin Chef," by Matt Kadey (Ulysses Press, \$15.95).

GRANOLA BARS

Makes 16 bars
Ingredients:
1/3 cup maple syrup



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Golden syrup helps bind apricot, pistachio and almond flapjacks. These substitute pecans for the pistachios.

1/4 cup brown sugar
3/4 teaspoon flake sea salt
1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil
2 cups old-fashioned rolled oats
1/2 cup raw pepitas
1/2 cup sunflower seeds
1/2 cup unsweetened flaked coconut
Instructions:

Heat oven to 300 degrees. Line a 13-by-9-inch pan with foil so it hangs over the sides. Spray with cooking spray. Whisk maple syrup, sugar and salt in a large bowl. Whisk in the oil. Process 1/2cup oats in food processor until finely ground. Transfer to the bowl with the maple syrup and stir in remaining ingredients and mix until thoroughly coated.

Spread mixture into prepared pan in a thin even layer. Compress with a spatula. Bake 45 minutes, or until deeply golden. Let cool for at least an hour before cutting.

This recipe is from "America's Test Kitchen D.I.Y. Cookbook" (\$26.95).

APRICOT, PISTACHIO AND ALMOND FLAPJACKS

Makes 24 flapjacks
Ingredients:
5 cups old-fashioned oatmeal

3/4 cup dried apricots, roughly chopped
1 1/2 ounces mixed seed (sesame, pumpkin, sunflower)
1/2 cup whole almonds, roughly chopped
1/2 cup whole pistachios, roughly chopped
1/3 cup plus 2 tablespoons butter, plus extra for greasing

2 heaping tablespoons tahini
3 heaping tablespoons golden syrup
1/4 cup granulated sugar
Instructions:

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees. Combine the dry ingredients except the sugar in a mixing bowl and set aside. Add the butter, tahini, syrup and sugar to a pan on a low heat. Stir to melt the butter and sugar, then add to the mixing bowl. Turn well to mix the two. Grease an ovenproof dish or baking tray and turn the mixture into it, pressing down firmly. Bake for 25 minutes until dark golden brown. Remove and slice straight away — the flapjacks will firm up as they cool.

Notes: Lyle's Golden Syrup can be found in some supermarkets. Honey can be used instead.

This recipe is from "Kitchen & Co.: Colorful Home Cooking Through the Seasons," by Rosie French and Ellie Grace (Kyle Books, \$22.95).

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