

# Pecan Bars

SERVES Makes 24

## WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS

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For a pecan bar recipe with all the best attributes of pecan pie—buttery crust, gooey filling, and nutty topping—we found that the flavors needed to be concentrated. We cut back on both wet and dry ingredients to find the perfect balance of sweetness and gooeyness. We added a substantial amount of vanilla extract along with bourbon (or rum) to cut through the sweetness and intensify the flavor of the nuts. To maximize the pecan flavor, we toasted them. Adding ground pecans to the crust gave a final nutty flavor boost to our pecan bar recipe.



## INGREDIENTS

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### Crust

- 1 cup unbleached all-purpose flour (5 ounces)
- ⅓ cup packed light brown sugar (2 1/3 ounces)
- ¼ cup toasted pecans, chopped coarse
- 1 teaspoon table salt
- ¼ teaspoon baking powder

## BEFORE YOU BEGIN

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✱ Toast all of the pecans for the recipe (2 ¼ cups) on a rimmed baking sheet in a 350-degree oven until fragrant (about 8 minutes), stirring once. Assemble the pecan filling while the crust bakes. Once the crust is lightly browned, spread the filling on top and continue baking. Because of their high sugar content, pecan bars store well and taste great up to 5 days after baking. While we liked bourbon the best, dark rum is quite good. For a very boozy tasting bar cookie, add another tablespoon of liquor.

- 6 tablespoons cold unsalted butter (3/4 stick), cut into 1/2-inch pieces

#### *Pecan Filling*

- 1/2 cup packed light brown sugar (3 1/2 ounces)
- 1/3 cup light corn syrup
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter (1/2 stick), melted
- 1 tablespoon bourbon or dark rum
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1/2 teaspoon table salt
- 1 large egg, lightly beaten
- 2 cups toasted pecans, chopped coarse

## INSTRUCTIONS

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**1** For the crust: Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 350 degrees. Spray 9-inch square baking pan with nonstick cooking spray. Fold two 16-inch pieces of foil or parchment paper lengthwise to measure 9 inches wide. Following illustrations 1 and 2 below, fit 1 sheet in bottom of greased pan, pushing it into corners and up sides of pan (overhang will help in removal of baked bars). Fit second sheet in pan in same manner, perpendicular to first sheet. Spray sheets with nonstick cooking spray.

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**2** Place flour, brown sugar, pecans, salt, and baking powder in food processor. Process mixture until it resembles coarse cornmeal, about five 1-second pulses. Add butter and pulse until mixture resembles sand, about eight 1-second pulses. Pat mixture evenly into prepared pan and bake until crust is light brown and springs back when touched, about 20 minutes.

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**3** For the pecan filling: While crust bakes, whisk together brown sugar, melted butter, corn syrup, bourbon, vanilla, and salt in medium bowl until just combined. Add egg and whisk until incorporated.

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**4** Pour filling on top of hot crust and sprinkle pecans evenly over top. Bake until top is brown and cracks start to form across surface, 22 to 25 minutes. Cool on wire rack for 1 hour. Remove bars from pan using foil or parchment handles and transfer to cutting board. Cut into bars that measure 1 1/2 inches by 2 1/4 inches.