

Raspberry Squares

SERVES Makes 25 squares

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS

Raspberry squares are one of the best, and easiest, bar cookies to prepare, especially since the filling is ready-made (a jar of raspberry preserves). But sometimes the proportions are uneven, leaving one parched from too much sandy crust, or with a puckered face from an overload of tart filling. We were after a buttery, tender, golden brown crust and crumb topping with just the right amount of sweet and tart raspberry preserves in the middle.

For the tender, almost (but not quite) sandy crumb, we had to get the right combination of ingredients, especially the butter and sugar. Too much butter made the raspberry squares greasy, but too little left them on the dry side. We found that equal amounts of white and light brown sugar made for a deeper flavor than white alone; oats and nuts made a subtle contribution to flavor while also adding some textural interest. For a golden brown bottom crust, we prebaked it before layering it with raspberry preserves and sprinkling on the top crust, which was a small amount of the reserved bottom crust mixture.



INGREDIENTS

- 1 ½ cups unbleached all-purpose flour (7.5 ounces)
- 1 ¼ cups quick-cooking oats

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- * Lining the pan with foil makes removal of the squares for cutting very easy (just lift out the entire block and place it on a cutting board to cut). For a nice presentation, trim 1/4 inch off the outer rim of the uncut baked block. The outside edges of all cut squares will then be neat.

- ⅓ cup granulated sugar (2.3 ounces)
- ⅓ cup packed light brown sugar
- ¼ teaspoon table salt
- ¼ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ cup finely chopped pecans or almonds, or a combination
- 12 tablespoons unsalted butter (1 1/2 sticks), cut into 12 pieces and softened by still cool
- 1 cup raspberry preserves

INSTRUCTIONS

1 Adjust oven rack to lower-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 lengthwise to measure 8 inches wide. Fit one sheet in bottom of greased pan, pushing it into corners and up sides of pan (overhang will help in removal of baked squares). Fit second sheet in pan in same manner, perpendicular to first sheet. Spray foil with nonstick cooking spray.

2 In bowl of standing mixer, mix flour, oats, sugars, baking soda, salt, and nuts at low speed until combined, about 30 seconds. With mixer running at low speed, add butter pieces; continue to beat until mixture is well-blended and resembles wet sand, about 2 minutes.

3 Transfer 2/3 of mixture to prepared pan and use hands to press crumbs evenly into bottom. Bake until starting to brown, about 20 minutes. Using rubber spatula, spread preserves evenly over hot bottom crust; sprinkle remaining oat/nut mixture evenly over preserves. Bake until preserves bubble around edges and top is golden brown, about 30 minutes, rotating pan from front to back halfway through baking time. Cool on wire rack to room temperature, about 1½ hours, then remove from pan using foil handles. Cut into 1¼- to 1½-inch squares and serve.