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Dark Chocolate Pecan Pie Bars

Makes 12 large bars or 20 smaller bars

These bars are guaranteed to be a hit! Starting with classic pecan pie flavors, the addition of dark chocolate takes these bars to a new level. The nutty pecans, dark chocolate, and a final sprinkle of flake salt balance out the sweetness usually characteristic of a pecan pie. Easy to assemble, these bars are perfect for sharing during the holiday season.

For Greasing the Pan:

1 tablespoon butter
1 tablespoon cocoa powder

Crust Ingredients:

1-1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1/4 cup brown sugar
1/2 cup butter, softened
1-1/2 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
1/2 teaspoon salt

Filling Ingredients:

2 cups pecan halves or pieces
3 large eggs, lightly beaten
3/4 cup packed brown sugar
3/4 cup light corn syrup
1/4 cup butter, melted
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1-1/2 cup dark chocolate chips
1 cup sweetened, flaked coconut
1/2 teaspoon flake salt, for garnish

Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Prepare a 9x13-inch baking pan by greasing it with 1 tablespoon of butter. Then, sprinkle 1 tablespoon of cocoa powder in the pan, tap so that all the buttered surfaces are dusted with the cocoa. Shake out any excess cocoa powder.
2. Prepare the crust. In a large bowl, whisk together the flour and sugar, and set aside. In a stand mixer, starting on low speed, beat together the butter, cocoa powder, salt, then add the sugar and flour mixture until well combined into a coarse crumb texture. Scrape the sides and base of the mixing bowl halfway through to ensure that all of the butter is evenly incorporated. Press the crust into the prepared baking pan and bake for 12 to 15 minutes, or until lightly browned.
3. Prepare the filling. In a large bowl, beat the eggs. Add the corn syrup, brown sugar, butter, vanilla and whisk together. Fold in the pecans, chocolate chips, and coconut.
4. Pour the filling into the baked crust.
5. Bake for an additional 20-25 minutes, or until the bars are set. Sprinkle the baked bars with the flake salt for a nice garnish.
6. Place the pan on a wire rack to cool completely. When ready, cut into bars.