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Granola Bars for Summer Hiking

By Susie Iventosch



Peanut Butter-Chocolate Chip Granola Bars
Photo Susie Iventosch

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When I made the peanut butter-chocolate chip bars, I added the chocolate chips a little too soon and they melted into the bars, rather than staying in one piece, as they do in chocolate chip cookies. So, I would recommend adding them after the mixture has cooled to room temperature, before baking them.

Try adding different dried fruits, nuts and spices to come up with your own favorite version!

Cinnamon Fruit-Nut Granola Bars

By Susie Iventosch

(Makes about 16 bars)

INGREDIENTS

Dries

3 1/2 cups oats (I used Old-Fashioned, but prefer Quick for making granola, and will use those next time)

1/4 cup wheat germ

1/4 cup sunflower seeds

1/2 cup pecan pieces

1/2 cup sliced almonds

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/2 teaspoon cinnamon

1/4 teaspoon cardamom

1 cup fruit and nut mix (like your favorite trail mix, I used Trader Joe's Legendary Nut & Berry Mix)

Syrup

1/2 cup brown sugar

1 cup honey (or agave, or half and half)

One day at the office, we started talking about food, which happens quite a lot, and my boss told us that his daughter makes granola bars! Wow. Even though we've made granola at our house for years, the idea of making granola bars had never occurred to me! What a great idea for summer camping and hiking, which is when I normally indulge in granola bars.

I asked for the recipe, twice, but it was not forthcoming, so last week I ventured forth on my own and attempted to make two different flavors: peanut butter-chocolate chip and cinnamon flavored fruit and nut. They turned out completely different and, just as store-bought granola bars vary from dry and crispy to gooey and chewy, mine did too! The key to making them dry or gooey is how much of the syrup concoction you add to the oat base and how long you bake it.

For the fruit-nut bars, I added pecans, sliced almonds, sunflower seeds as well as a cup of Trader Joe's "Legendary Nut & Berry Mix," which also includes almonds, cranberries, raisins, cashews, blueberries, raspberries and walnuts, so this one is chock-full of energy.

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2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract

DIRECTIONS

Grease a 9-by-13 inch baking dish, or spray with cooking spray.

Place all dries, spices and fruit in a large bowl. Toss to mix well.

Heat honey, brown sugar and vanilla over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until brown sugar is completely dissolved. Remove from heat.

Pour syrup over dries and toss to coat well. Pat into prepared pan and bake at 300 F for approximately 15 minutes, or until desired doneness.

Remove from oven and cool for about 10 minutes before scoring into the size bars you want. Allow them to cool completely before removing the bars from the pan.

Peanut Butter-Chocolate Chip Granola Bars

By Susie Iventosch

(Makes about 8 granola bars)

INGREDIENTS

2 cups oats

1/4 cup nuts (your choice - peanuts, cashews, pecans, almonds)

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/2 cup chocolate chips

Syrup

3 heaping tablespoons peanut butter (either crunchy or creamy are fine)

2/3 cup honey (or agave, or combination)

1/4 cup brown sugar

1 teaspoon vanilla

DIRECTIONS

Place oats, nuts and salt in a medium bowl. Mix well. Keep chocolate chips on the side for now.

Heat honey, brown sugar and peanut butter over medium heat until peanut butter and sugar are dissolved. Add vanilla and stir well.

Pour sweet mixture over dries and mix well. Allow to cool to room temperature, then stir in chocolate chips.

Spread mixture into a well-greased 8-by-8 inch pan. Bake at 300 F for approximately 15 minutes, or to desired doneness.

Remove from oven and cool for about 10 minutes. Score into bars, but don't cut into bars until completely cooled.

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