Pumpkin Bars with Cream Cheese Frosting

Tender pumpkin cake bars finished with a tangy cream cheese frosting. Cut them small for a dessert tray or a little larger for an easy after-dinner treat.



MAKES

24 bars

PREP

25 minutes

BAKE

25-32 minutes

ALSO ALLOW

Cool completely before frosting

PAN

9 x 13-inch baking pan

Ingredients

Bars: 2 cups (240 g) all-purpose flour

Bars: 2 teaspoons baking powder

Bars: 1/2 teaspoon baking soda

Bars: 1/2 teaspoon fine salt

Bars: 2 teaspoons pumpkin pie spice

Bars: 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Bars: 3 large eggs

Bars: 1 cup granulated sugar

Bars: 1/2 cup packed light brown sugar

Bars: 3/4 cup neutral oil

Bars: 1 can (15 ounces) pumpkin puree, not pie filling

Bars: 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Frosting: 8 ounces full-fat brick cream cheese, softened

Frosting: 1/4 cup unsalted butter, softened

Frosting: 2 cups powdered sugar, sifted

Frosting: 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Frosting: pinch of salt

Optional: cinnamon for a light dusting

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Method

1. Heat the oven to 350 F. Grease a 9 x 13-inch pan and line the base with parchment, leaving a sling on two sides.

2. Whisk flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt and spices in one bowl. In a second bowl, whisk eggs, both sugars, oil, pumpkin and vanilla until smooth.

3. Fold dry ingredients into the pumpkin mixture just until combined. Spread evenly in the pan.

4. Bake 25-32 minutes, until the center springs back lightly and a toothpick comes out clean or with a few moist crumbs. Cool completely in the pan on a rack.

5. Beat the softened cream cheese and butter until smooth. Add powdered sugar gradually, then vanilla and salt. Beat only until creamy and spreadable; scrape the bowl as needed.

6. Spread frosting over the cool bars. Dust very lightly with cinnamon if desired. Refrigerate 30 minutes for cleaner cuts, then cut into 24 bars.

Jane's Note

Wait until the cake is completely cool before frosting. Even a little warmth will soften the cream cheese frosting too much.

Make ahead

Bake the cake one day ahead, cool, cover and refrigerate. Frost the next day.

Storage

Keep frosted bars covered in the refrigerator for up to 4 days. Let stand briefly at room temperature before serving. Freeze for up to 2 months.