

Apricot Coconut Almond Squares

Jen Maharaj-Stott of Just Baking and The Canadian Baker - To make this bar cookie, you need to soften up the apricots by simmering them in a liquid. I chose water, but you could also add more flavour by using orange juice or Citrus Five Alive - whatever you fancy. Once they're a bit mushier (but not like a puree), you mix it up with a whole bunch of other good stuff and bake it over a shortbread crust. I was unsure how they would come out, but I needn't have worried.

After 30 minutes, they were done and a nice light shade of brown. I let them cool for a bit and then sliced them up into neat squares. So far so good but, as they say, the proof is in the pudding or eating or something. The bars were surprisingly delicious. I knew they'd taste good, but not this good. The buttery crust went together amazingly well with the sweet chewy apricot filling. I chopped my apricots a little larger, so I had nice big chunks intermingled with coconut and crunchy almonds. A winner on all accounts. They're perfect for a dessert tray and if you throw in some dried cranberries, they'd look even prettier.

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Crust

1/2 cup dairy-free margarine, softened [Jen's version calls for butter, but margarine should cause little sacrifice to the overall recipe]

1/4 cup granulated sugar

1 cup all-purpose flour

Topping

1 cup chopped dried apricots

water

1/2 cup sweetened coconut

2 eggs

1 cup packed brown sugar

1/3 cup all-purpose flour

1/2 tsp baking powder

1 tsp vanilla

1/2 cup chopped almonds

Preheat oven to 325 °F (160 °C) and grease a 9-inch square baking pan.

Crust: Cream butter and granulated sugar until light and creamy. Add flour; mix well. Press into prepared pan.

Bake for 15 to 20 minutes or until light golden.

Topping: Combine apricots and enough water to cover in small saucepan. Bring to boil over low heat and simmer for 10 minutes. Drain well; set aside.

Beat eggs and brown sugar until smoothly blended. Stir in flour, baking powder and vanilla. Mix well. Stir in apricot mixture, coconut and almonds. Spread over warm crust.

Bake for 30 to 35 minutes. Cool completely in pan on rack, then cut into squares.

Note: I used 1/2 cup of water to simmer the apricots. This way, I did not have to drain any liquid after the 10 minutes.

Source: Adapted from Robin Hood Home Baking, 2004