



GRAINola Bars

Chewy homemade granola bars with oats, flax, pumpkin, cranberries, nuts and mini chocolate chips

Why bother buying expensive boxes of granola bars full of questionable ingredients when it's easy and fun to make your own? You can individually wrap and refrigerate the bars to make portable, grab-and-go snacks.

- 2½ cups quick-cooking rolled oats (not instant)
- 1 cup unsweetened shredded coconut
- ½ cup chopped raw almonds, pecans or pistachios
- ½ cup chopped dried cranberries
- ½ cup mini semi-sweet chocolate chips
- ⅓ cup whole wheat flour (see tip)
- ¼ cup ground flaxseed
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- ½ tsp salt
- ¾ cup canned pure pumpkin (not pumpkin pie filling)
- ½ cup liquid honey
- ¼ cup butter, melted
- 1 vanilla

- Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 9 x 13-inch baking pan with parchment paper, letting the paper overhang on two opposite sides (so you can use it as a sling to pick up the granola bars after baking).
- Combine first 9 ingredients in a large bowl. Mix well. In a medium bowl, whisk together pumpkin, honey, butter and vanilla. Pour wet ingredients over dry ingredients. Mix using a wooden spoon until dry ingredients are coated with pumpkin mixture. Make sure there aren't any dry oats in the bottom of the bowl! Stir, stir, stir!
- Pour the wet granola mixture into the prepared pan and spread it evenly to the edges. Using your hand, press down firmly on the granola so that it's tightly packed in the pan.
- Bake on middle oven rack for about 25 minutes, until top turns a light golden brown and feels dry to touch. Remove pan from oven and cool completely on a wire rack. Lift cooled slab of granola from pan by holding on to parchment paper and transfer to a cutting board. Using a large, sharp knife, cut the granola into 16 bars, about 1½ x 4 inches each. (Tip: Press down with the knife to cut the bars and avoid a sawing motion.) Wrap bars tightly in plastic wrap and store in an airtight container, either at room temperature or in the fridge.

Variation: For banana-nut granola bars, use mashed ripe bananas instead of pure pumpkin and replace the dried cranberries with chopped walnuts.

MAKES 16 BARS

PER BAR

214 calories, 9.7 g total fat (5 g saturated fat), 4 g protein, 30 g carbohydrate, 3.4 g fiber, 9 mg cholesterol, 83 mg sodium



Recipe Tips The smaller you chop your dried cranberries and nuts, the better the bars will hold together. You can use just about any dried fruit and nuts you like, but please keep the quantities the same, or the bars may not hold together properly. For a gluten-free version, make sure your oats are certified gluten-free. Replace the whole wheat flour with oat flour. To make it, simply measure an additional cup of oats and place them in a food processor, then pulse on and off until the oats are ground to a super-fine consistency, like flour. Measure ⅓ cup oat flour and use it instead of the wheat flour.