

The Dream Bar

In the fourteen years that I owned my bakery, Butter Baked Goods, the Dream Bar was always one of the most popular treats sold, especially at Christmas. It seemed no gathering in the city would have been complete without at least a few of these bars. I'm not surprised. The combination of shortbread, cherries, walnuts and coconut is a celebration on its own, made even more so when topped with a layer of creamy icing! I chose to add a little of the maraschino syrup to the butter cream to give it a festive pink hue but you can always skip that step if you'd prefer classic white icing.

Crust:

3/4 cup all purpose flour

1 tbsp sugar

3 ounces butter (1/3 cup + 1 tbsp), chilled

Filling:

1.5 tbsp all purpose flour

1/2 tsp baking powder

1 large egg

1/3 cup dark brown sugar

1 tsp pure vanilla

1/2 cup unsweetened shredded coconut

1/3 cup walnuts, chopped

1/4 cup maraschino cherries, drained and finely chopped

Butter Cream:

1/4 cup butter, room temperature

1 cup icing sugar

1/4 cup heavy cream

2 tsp maraschino cherry syrup (optional)

Makes: 24 bars

You will need: 1 8-inch square pan buttered and lined with parchment

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

To prepare the crust, combine the flour, sugar and butter in a medium bowl. Use a pastry cutter to cut in the chilled butter until loose crumbs form. Press the dough into the prepared pan firmly and evenly.

Bake in the preheated oven for 10 minutes, until just starting to turn lightly golden brown.

Using a stand mixer fitted with a paddle attachment or a large mixing bowl and a hand held mixer prepare the filling by beating the eggs, brown sugar and vanilla on medium to high speed for 2 minutes, until pale in colour.

Turn the mixer to low and add the dry ingredients and mix to combine. Add the coconut, cherries, and walnuts and mix again until well combined. Spread the filling evenly over the baked crust.

Bake for 20 minutes or until the filling has set and is lightly browned.

Remove the pan from the oven and allow the bars to cool completely in the pan.

In a stand mixer fitted with a paddle attachment or a large mixing bowl using a hand held mixer, cream the butter and icing sugar on medium speed until pale in colour. Turn the mixer to low and slowly add the cream. Scrape down the sides of the bowl and add the cherry syrup. Turn the mixer to high and continue to mix until light and fluffy.

Use a small offset spatula to spread the butter cream smoothly overtop the cooled bars. Chill in the refrigerator until the butter cream is firm to the touch.

Run a small knife along the two edges of the pan that do not have parchment handles. Carefully remove the bars from the pan and cut into 24 even squares. Make sure to use a at least a 10-inch knife to avoid cutting and dragging the knife across the bars which would muck up your lovely icing.