

NANAIMO BARS

Makes one 9x13 tray of bars

BASE LAYER

1. Pour water into the bottom of a double boiler (or a small pot with a metal bowl placed on top – make sure the bottom of the bowl doesn't touch any of the water) and bring to a simmer over low heat. Add the butter, sugar, cocoa, and vanilla to the top of the double boiler (or bowl) and mix until the butter is melted.
2. Add the eggs and stir until thick. Remove from heat and mix in the graham crackers, coconut (if using) and walnuts.
3. Place a piece of wax paper in the bottom of a 9x13 pan. The paper should be longer than the pan to allow you to lift the bars out later. Spread the mixture evenly across the pan using a spatula. Put the pan the fridge or freezer as you work on the next layer.

CUSTARD LAYER

1. Cream the butter using an electric mixer until light and fluffy, about 2 minutes.
2. Add the milk and stir briefly. It will not incorporate fully into the butter.
3. Add the vanilla custard powder and slowly begin adding confectioner's sugar. Mix on low at first before increasing to a high speed, once all the sugar has been added.
4. Spread the buttercream over the chilled base and return to the fridge or freezer.

CHOCOLATE LAYER

1. Melt the chocolate and butter, either in a double boiler or the microwave (if using the microwave, heat in short increments to avoid burning).
2. Once liquid, pour over the buttercream layer. It's important the buttercream is cold so it doesn't melt and mix into the chocolate. The best way to know is by poking it. If it feels stiff and your finger doesn't leave much of an indent, it's ready for chocolate. 30 minutes in the freezer or 60 minutes in the fridge is plenty. Spread the chocolate across the whole pan and return to the refrigerator.

The bars are ready to serve once the top layer has hardened. To serve, use the wax paper to lift the entire slab out of the pan and cut into squares.

Adapted from Mrs. Raymond Brick's recipe in the Oak Bluff Women's Institute Cook Book

1 cup of unsalted butter

½ cup plus 2 tablespoons granulated sugar

½ cup plus 2 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder

2 teaspoons vanilla extract

2 eggs, beaten

32 double graham crackers, rolled to crumbs or small pieces (approximately 2 cups of crumbs)

1 cup shredded unsweetened coconut (optional)

1 cup chopped walnuts

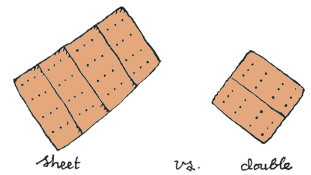
— A double graham cracker is a square that contains two rectangular crackers. They often come in sheets that include two-double graham crackers, four crackers per sheet.

8 tablespoons unsalted butter (1/2 cup), room temperature

6 tablespoons milk

4 tablespoons vanilla custard powder

4 cups confectioner's sugar



— BIRD'S CUSTARD POWDER is the most popular, often found in the international section of grocery stores, near British foods. World Market also carries it.

8 oz. bittersweet chocolate

6 tablespoons unsalted butter



SUBSTITUTES: Vegan eggs, vegan butter, and non-dairy milk all work well in this recipe. Gluten-free graham crackers may also be used. If you can't find custard powder, an equal amount of vanilla pudding powder can be used. Your center layer just may not be as yellow as when you use the traditional custard powder.