



## Bukkah's Granola Bars

*Makes 16 pretty substantial bars that you could cut in half again, but trust me you'll eat an entire bar!*

### Ingredients:

- 1  $\frac{2}{3}$  cups old fashioned oats – divided one cup and  $\frac{2}{3}$  cups
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup raw turbinado sugar (I prefer this more granular sugar for texture)
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon sea salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 3 oz dried cherries or dried cranberries
- 6 large pitted and chopped medjool dates
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup unsweetened shredded coconut
- Scant cup of finely chopped pecans (I put whole pecans in the Nutribullet for a few seconds to really chop them finely but you can do this by hand too)
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup untoasted white sesame seeds
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup raw unsalted sunflower seeds
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup raw unsalted pumpkin seeds
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup chunky peanut butter or sunflower butter
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 6 tablespoons melted salted butter (cool briefly)
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup honey
- 1 tablespoon water

### Instructions:

Preheat the oven to 350. Grease then line an 8" x 8" x 2" brownie pan in one direction with parchment paper, allowing it to go up the opposing sides. Lightly grease the parchment paper and the exposed pan, or coat with a non-stick spray.

Place one cup of the oats in a mixing bowl. Place the other  $\frac{2}{3}$  cup in a blender or Nutribullet and whirl them briefly to make oatmeal flour. Then add this to the bowl with the other oats. Add in all the other dry ingredients, including the fruit and nuts, and stir well.

In a separate bowl, whisk together the vanilla, melted butter, peanut butter, honey and water. With your hands or wearing disposable gloves, mix the wet ingredients with the dry ingredients. The raw mix will be like thick, wet oatmeal.

Spread in the prepared pan, pressing down firmly all over, into the corner too, to ensure they are molded to the shape of the pan. I use the flat part of a bench scraper and really push hard to pack the bars.

Bake the bars for 35 minutes, until they're brown around the edges and top. They'll still seem soft in the center of the pan but will firm up when cooling. I press everything down firmly again in five minutes after they sit on the counter in the pan. Again, I use my palms. After you push the bars down, go around the perimeter with a knife to loosen.

In 30 minutes, cover the pan with a cutting board and flip it over so the bottom side of the bars face up. The parchment will keep them from sticking. Peel the parchment paper off the top and put the cutting board and bars into the fridge for another half hour.

Once the bars are totally cold, use a serrated knife to cut the bars into 16 squares. Do this carefully so they don't crumble apart.

To store, I put the cut bars in glass or plastic airtight covered containers and I usually keep mine in the fridge or freezer.

It surprises me that my grandkids, who are highly discriminating eaters, didn't really think these were worth oohing and ahhhing over. Fine, more for us. In a scientific controlled study of 25 Seattle and San Francisco relatives and friends, 100% of participants were crazy about these bars.

For me, it's going to be a recipe I rotate through on a weekly basis until I get tired of it. When I'm starving or in a plane, these are fantastic. And they are hands down superior to commercial granola bars with a long shelf life that come in tiny plastic bags with words like food coloring and high fructose corn syrup high up on the ingredient list.

These follow my own food rules: they contain whole foods, lots of seeds, nuts and whole grains, and dried unsweetened fruit. Perfect? Of course not. They contain sugar *and* honey and butter. But in my world when I start with mostly whole foods and make something that has a freezer life and is so satisfying when I'm on the run, I'm happy.