



## Gluten Free Lemon Bars

Classic lemon bars get an allergy friendly twist with these Gluten Free Lemon Bars! Our creamy lemon bars with a shortbread cookie crust are also egg free as well, and have a vegan option.

**Free of: gluten, tree nuts (except coconut), eggs, peanuts**

Prep Time 15 minutes

Cook Time 25 minutes

Chill time 4 hours

Total Time 4 hours 40 minutes

Servings 12 bars

Adapted from Author Sarah Jane Parker and modified with additional information.

### Ingredients

#### Shortbread Crust

- 1-1/4 cups gluten free all-purpose flour (if you don't need it to be GF then regular all-purpose flour works well too)
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon salt (omit if your GF all-purpose flour has salt or baking soda already)
- 6 Tablespoons Butter, melted (or dairy free butter, melted - you can use Country Crock Plant Butter sticks made with olive oil or avocado oil)

#### Lemon Filling

- 1-1/2 cup canned coconut milk (or if you wish you can use regular cow milk, almond milk or another plant-based milk)
- 2/3 cup powdered sugar
- 2 Tablespoons cornstarch
- 1 teaspoon [unleveled] unflavored gelatin powder\* (or 1/2 to 3/4 teaspoon agar powder for vegan)
- 1/4 cup fresh lemon juice
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla

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- 1/2 teaspoon lemon extract
- Zest of 1 fresh lemon [or grated dried lemon peel approximately 1/2 tsp]
- Pinch of yellow natural food color powder, **optional\*\*** if using the McCormick natural color powder, it doesn't take much yellow powder to color the batch. This is just to make the bars more yellow where traditional recipes have egg yolks that add yellow color. This step is optional and they are great without it.

### Instructions

#### Shortbread crust

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Line an 8x8-inch square baking dish with parchment paper and set aside. This can be cut in two pan width strips and laid in across each other to help facilitate removing the lemon bars after they've set. If you'd like to skip using parchment paper then simply spray your square baking dish with nonstick spray. If you do not have a square baking dish then any relative dish adding up to 8x8 should do. I used two 8x4 bread pans for one batch.
2. In a medium bowl, stir together the gluten free flour, sugar, and salt (if using).
3. Stir in the melted [dairy free] butter and mix with a fork until it looks like crumbs. Press this crumbly mixture into the prepared pan with a fork or spoon until it's pressed evenly into the bottom of the pan.
4. Bake the shortbread crust in the heated oven for 25 minutes.
5. Remove and allow to cool on a wire rack.

#### Lemon Filling

1. While the crust is cooking, prepare the lemon filling.
2. Add 1 cup of coconut milk [of milk of choice] to a small saucepan and whisk in the cornstarch, gelatin powder, and powdered sugar until smooth and there are no lumps. I used an electric beater, but a whisk works fine too.
3. Whisk in the rest of the coconut milk, lemon zest, lemon juice, vanilla, lemon extract and heat over medium-low heat, whisking regularly, until it thickens (about 10-15 minutes).
4. If you're making vegan lemon bars, the filling will thicken faster, in about 8 minutes over medium-low heat.
5. Turn off the heat and allow the mixture to cool completely, stirring occasionally to make sure the mixture stays smooth as it cools. It should be similar in texture to

Gluten Free Lemon Bars (Dairy Free) <https://thefitcookie.com/classic-lemon-bars/>

pudding, but not quite as thick (the vegan filling will be thicker at this point than the gelatin filling).

#### Putting it all together

1. Once the crust is done baking, remove it from the oven and place on a wire rack to cool.
2. The crust and the filling should both be cooled well before adding the filling onto the crust. It will take about 35 minutes for the filling and crust to cool enough to assemble the bars.
3. Pour the lemon filling onto the baked crust, smooth it out, and place it in the fridge *uncovered* until the filling is completely set (about 4 hours). Leaving it uncovered is important to prevent condensation on the top of the bars.
4. Once the filling has set completely after about 4 hours, take it out of the fridge and leave it at room temp for about 30 minutes before cutting (this makes it easier to cut the shortbread crust).
5. Once the bars are cut, you can decide if you'd like to keep the lemon bars at room temperature or chilled.

#### Notes

\* To make these lemon bars vegan, use 1/2 to 3/4 teaspoon agar powder instead of 1 teaspoon gelatin powder. When you make this with agar, it takes less time to thicken the lemon filling on the stove than with the gelatin mixture.

I prefer the texture and taste of the bars made with gelatin than with agar powder, but these still work good when made with agar!

\*\* If you don't want to add yellow coloring, you can leave it out. The bars will be white from the coconut milk with flecks of yellow lemon zest in the filling.

\*\*\*If you can't find or don't have unflavored gelatin then you can use regular flavored [lemon] gelatin at 4.5 teaspoons from a 3-ounce package. I have not tried sugar free gelatin; however, I am sure you could do it with a 1/2 tsp from a 0.3-ounce package, but you might need more as the conversions are not always even.

Gluten Free Lemon Bars (Dairy Free) <https://thefitcookie.com/classic-lemon-bars/>