

COOK'S

I L L U S T R A T E D

KEY LIME BARS

Makes sixteen 2-inch bars. Published July 1, 2006.

If you cannot find fresh Key limes, use regular (Persian) limes. Do not use bottled lime juice. Grate the zest from the limes before juicing them, avoiding the bitter white pith that lies just beneath the outermost skin. The optional coconut garnish adds textural interest and tames the lime flavor for those who find it too intense. The recipe can be doubled and baked in a 13- by 9-inch baking pan; you will need a double layer of extra-wide foil for the pan (each sheet about 20 inches in length) and should increase the baking times by a minute or two.

Crust

- 5** ounces animal crackers
- 3** tablespoons packed brown sugar (light or dark)
Pinch table salt
- 4** tablespoons unsalted butter , melted and cooled slightly

Filling

- 2** ounces cream cheese , room temperature
- 1** tablespoon grated lime zest , minced
Pinch table salt
- 1** (14-ounce) can sweetened condensed milk
- 1** egg yolk
- 1/2** cup fresh lime juice , either Key lime or regular

Garnish (optional)

- 3/4** cup sweetened shredded coconut , toasted until golden and crisp

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1.** 1. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 325 degrees. Cut about 12-inch length extra-wide heavy-duty foil; fold cut edges back to form 7 1/2-inch width. With folded sides facing down, fit foil securely into bottom and up sides of 8-inch-square baking pan, allowing excess to overhang pan sides. Spray foil with nonstick cooking spray.
- 2.** **2. TO MAKE THE CRUST:** In workbowl of food processor, pulse animal crackers until broken down, about ten 1-second pulses; process crumbs until evenly fine, about 10 seconds (you should have about 1 1/4 cups crumbs). Add brown sugar and salt; process to combine, ten to twelve 1-second pulses (if large sugar lumps remain, break them apart with fingers). Drizzle butter over crumbs and pulse until crumbs are evenly moistened with butter, about ten 1-second pulses. Press crumbs evenly and firmly into bottom of prepared pan. Bake until deep golden brown, 18 to 20 minutes. Cool on wire rack while making filling. Do not turn off oven.
- 3.** **3. TO MAKE THE FILLING:** While crust cools, in medium bowl, stir cream cheese, zest, and salt with rubber spatula until softened, creamy, and thoroughly combined. Add sweetened condensed milk and whisk vigorously until incorporated and no lumps of cream cheese remain; whisk in egg yolk. Add lime juice and whisk gently until incorporated (mixture will thicken slightly).

4. **4. TO ASSEMBLE AND BAKE:** Pour filling into crust; spread to corners and smooth surface with rubber spatula. Bake until set and edges begin to pull away slightly from sides, 15 to 20 minutes. Cool on wire rack to room temperature, 1 to 1 1/2 hours. Cover with foil and refrigerate until thoroughly chilled, at least 2 hours.
5. **5.** Loosen edges with paring knife and lift bars from baking pan using foil extensions; cut bars into 16 squares. Sprinkle with toasted coconut, if using, and serve. (Leftovers can be refrigerated up to 2 days; crust will soften slightly. Let bars stand at room temperature about 15 minutes before serving.)

STEP - BY - STEP

Building Key Lime Bars



1. Line pan with foil sling, then coat with cooking spray.



2. Press crumb mixture firmly and evenly into pan.



3. Pour filling into prebaked crust and spread into corners.



America's Test Kitchen is a 2,500-square-foot kitchen located just outside of Boston. It is the home of Cook's Country and Cook's Illustrated magazines and is the workday destination for more than three dozen test cooks, editors, and cookware specialists. Our mission is to test recipes until we understand how and why they work and arrive at the best version. We also test kitchen equipment and supermarket ingredients in search of brands that offer the best value and performance. You can watch us work by tuning in to America's Test Kitchen (www.americastestkitchen.com) on public television.