

FRUIT SQUARES FOR ALL SEASONS

A recipe by **FoodNouveau**

Makes 12 squares

INGREDIENTS

For the crust

- ½ cup [125 ml] unbleached all-purpose flour, whole wheat flour, or brown rice flour (*gluten-free variation*)
¾ cup [180 ml] finely ground nuts: almond, walnut, pecan, hazelnut, or pistachio. Make sure to grind the nuts before measuring, and to measure, spoon the ground nuts into a measuring cup without packing.
1/3 cup [80 ml] powdered sugar
3 tbsp [45 ml] cornstarch
¼ tsp [1.25 ml] salt
1/3 cup [80 ml] oil of your choice. Either go for a mild flavored healthy oil, or match the oil to the fruit bar flavors: canola, sunflower, grape-seed, walnut, hazelnut, pistachio, soft-tasting olive oil, or coconut oil are all excellent choices. You can also use melted butter or dairy-free spread, if you wish.

For the fruit filling (except citrus fruits—see below)

- 1 cup [250 ml] strained, unsweetened fruit puree. Fruit puree can be store-bought (see “About Using Store-Bought Fruit Puree,” p. 5), or you can make your own (see “How to Make Fruit Puree,” p. 5). Choose between blueberries, raspberries, blackberries, strawberries, rhubarb, cherry, mango, or peach, or use a combination (see p. 3 for flavor combination inspiration). The fruit puree you use should be the consistency of a fruit nectar or a loose smoothie.
2 tbsp [30 ml] freshly squeezed lemon juice
1/3 cup [80 ml] cane sugar (*I prefer using unrefined sugar, but you can also use regular granulated sugar*)
3 tbsp [45 ml] cornstarch
pinch of salt
2 large eggs

For the citrus fruit filling: Because citrus fruit juice is more liquid than a fruit puree, you need to use a lesser quantity, and add one egg to allow the filling to set as expected.

- ¾ cup [180 ml] citrus fruit juice, freshly squeezed and strained to remove the pulp: lemon, Meyer lemon, lime, Key lime, grapefruit (preferably pink), blood orange, or clementine, or a combination
2 tsp [10 ml] zest from the citrus fruits you are using, finely grated
sugar, preferable cane sugar:
• Lemon, lime, Key lime, grapefruit: ¾ cup [180 ml]
• Meyer lemon, blood orange or clementine: ½ cup [125 ml]
3 tbsp [45 ml] cornstarch
pinch of salt
3 large eggs



To serve, choice or combination of:

powdered sugar
 fresh fruit
 chopped nuts
 whipped cream
 Italian meringue (*dairy-free option*)
 coconut whipped cream (*dairy-free option*,
 see "How to Make Coconut Whipped
 Cream," p. 5)

METHOD

Preheat the oven to 350°F [175°C]. Line an 8-inch [20-cm] square baking pan with parchment paper, letting it overhang on two sides (this will make it easier to pull the squares out later.)

Make the crust: In a medium bowl, combine the flour, ground nuts, powdered sugar, cornstarch, and salt. Add the oil. Using a pastry cutter, a fork, or your fingers, mix the oil into the flour mixture until evenly crumbly. Firmly press the dough flat into the prepared pan to form the crust. Bake the crust until it barely starts to brown around the edges, 15 to 20 minutes.

Make the filling:

- *If using fruit puree:* Mix the fruit puree and lemon juice together. Set aside.
- *If using citrus juice:* Keep the strained, measured juice close to your working station. If using juice from different citrus fruits, combine them now.

In a medium bowl, whisk sugar, cornstarch, and a pinch of salt in a medium bowl until well combined. Add the eggs one at a time, whisking until one egg is fully incorporated before adding the next. Stir in the fruit puree mixture or citrus juice, and whisk vigorously until the mixture is completely smooth. If making citrus fruit squares, stir in the finely grated zest now.

When the crust is done, pour the filling over the crust (it's OK if the crust is still hot from the oven.)

Bake until just set, about 15 to 18 minutes. The filling should barely start to turn golden around the edges, and the center should still be barely set, even a tiny bit jiggly—it will firm up as it cools. If you prepared the crust in advance and it is completely cool when you pour the filling over, add 5 to 7 minutes to the baking time.

Let the fruit squares cool to room temperature, then refrigerate at least 2 hours.

SERVING

Gently slide a sharp knife along the edges of the pan that are not covered with parchment paper, and lift out of the pan all in one piece using the edges of the parchment paper. Cut into 12 squares. Dust with powdered sugar or garnish with the topping of your choice just before serving.



STORAGE

These squares are best enjoyed within a day or two; past that, the crust can become soggy. Store leftover squares in a single layer in an airtight container in the fridge.

FLAVOR COMBINATIONS**Raspberry and Pecan Squares**

Crust: Use ground pecans and canola oil, sunflower oil, grapeseed oil, soft-tasting olive oil, melted butter, or dairy-free spread.

Filling: Use fresh or frozen raspberries. There is no need to thaw frozen raspberries before making the fruit puree (see *How to Make Fruit Puree*, p. 5).

Topping: Dusting of powdered sugar and fresh raspberries.

Blueberry and Toasted Hazelnut Squares

Crust: Use ground toasted hazelnuts (see *How to Toast and Peel Hazelnuts*, p. 5). Use hazelnut oil, canola oil, sunflower oil, grapeseed oil, soft-tasting olive oil, melted butter, or dairy-free spread.

Filling: Use fresh or frozen regular or wild blueberries. There is no need to thaw frozen blueberries before making the fruit puree (see *How to Make Fruit Puree*, p. 5).

Topping: Dusting of powdered sugar and fresh blueberries; or dollop of whipped cream and coarsely chopped hazelnuts.

Blackberry and Walnut Squares

Crust: Use ground walnuts and walnut oil, canola oil, sunflower oil, grapeseed oil, soft-tasting olive oil, melted butter, or dairy-free spread.

Filling: Use fresh or frozen blackberries. There is no need to thaw frozen blackberries before making the fruit puree (see *How to Make Fruit Puree*, p. 5).

Topping: Dusting of powdered sugar and walnut halves.

Strawberry and Pistachio Squares

Crust: Use ground pistachios and pistachio oil, canola oil, sunflower oil, grapeseed oil, soft-tasting olive oil, melted butter, or dairy-free spread.

Filling: Use in-season fresh strawberries, for the best taste (see *How to Make Fruit Puree*, p. 5).

Topping: Dusting of powdered sugar, fresh strawberry halves, and coarsely chopped pistachios.

Strawberry, Rhubarb, and Almond Squares

Crust: Use ground almonds (also called almond flour) and canola oil, sunflower oil, grapeseed oil, soft-tasting olive oil, melted butter, or dairy-free spread.

Filling: Use a ratio of half fresh strawberries, half chopped rhubarb stalks to make the fruit puree (see *How to Make Fruit Puree*, p. 5).

Topping: Dusting of powdered sugar and fresh strawberry halves; or dollop of whipped cream and spoonful of rhubarb and fresh strawberry compote.



Mango and Coconut Squares

Crust: Use a ratio of ½ cup [125 ml] ground almonds (also called almond flour), and ¼ cup [60 ml] shredded coconut (or use only ground almonds, if desired). Use melted coconut oil to impart a lovely exotic flavor to the dessert. Alternatively, you can also use canola oil, sunflower oil, grapeseed oil, soft-tasting olive oil, melted butter, or dairy-free spread.

Filling: Use very ripe fresh mango (peeled and coarsely chopped), or cubed frozen mango (see *How to Make Fruit Puree*, p. 5).

Topping: Toasted coconut flakes; or dollop of whipped coconut cream and finely cubed fresh mango.

Peach and Walnut Squares

Crust: Use ground walnuts and walnut oil, canola oil, sunflower oil, grapeseed oil, soft-tasting olive oil, melted butter, or dairy-free spread.

Filling: Use very ripe fresh peaches (peeled and coarsely chopped), or cubed frozen peaches (see *How to Make Fruit Puree*, p. 5).

Topping: Dusting of powdered sugar; or dollop of whipped cream and finely cubed fresh mango.

Classic Lemon or Meyer Lemon and Almond Squares

Crust: Use ground almonds (also called almond flour) and canola oil, sunflower oil, grapeseed oil, soft-tasting olive oil, melted butter, or dairy-free spread.

Filling: For the best taste, ONLY use freshly squeezed lemon juice.

Topping: Dusting of powdered sugar; or dollop of Italian meringue.

Passionfruit, Lemon, and Coconut Squares

Crust: Use a ratio of ½ cup [125 ml] ground almonds (also called almond flour), and ¼ cup [60 ml] shredded coconut (or use only ground almonds, if desired). Use melted coconut oil to impart a lovely exotic flavor to the dessert. Alternatively, you can also use canola oil, sunflower oil, grapeseed oil, soft-tasting olive oil, melted butter, or dairy-free spread.

Filling: Use a ratio of ½ cup [125 ml] passion fruit pulp (seeds strained out) or passion fruit puree and ¼ cup [60 ml] freshly squeezed lemon juice. For the best taste, ONLY use freshly squeezed lemon juice.

Topping: Toasted coconut flakes; or dollop of whipped coconut cream and spoonful of passion fruit pulp.

Lime and Toasted Hazelnut Squares

Crust: Use ground toasted hazelnuts (see *How to Toast and Peel Hazelnuts*, below). Use hazelnut oil, canola oil, sunflower oil, grapeseed oil, soft-tasting olive oil, melted butter, or dairy-free spread.

Filling: For the best taste, ONLY use freshly squeezed lime juice.

Topping: Dusting of powdered sugar and coarsely chopped toasted hazelnuts.



How to Make Fruit Puree

Combine 3 cups [750 ml] berries, pitted if applicable, or chopped ripe fruit, peeled and pitted, and ¼ cup [60 ml] water in a medium saucepan. Cook over medium-high heat, stirring frequently, until the fruits are very soft, 4 to 6 minutes. Pour the mixture into a blender, and blitz until very smooth (you can also use a stick blender to puree the mixture straight into the saucepan.) Strain the puree through a fine mesh sieve and into a measuring cup. You need 1 cup of fruit puree; remove any extra (add it to smoothies or as a topping for ice cream!). Let cool completely before adding to the recipe. **NOTE:** You can use frozen fruit and prepare it the same way.

About Using Store-Bought Fruit Puree

Fruit puree is sold in tubs, frozen, in many grocery stores. If you want to use store-bought fruit puree, make sure to choose an unsweetened variety. If you can't find any, make sure to choose a brand that contains a maximum of 10% sugar, and reduce the sugar quantity to ¼ cup [60 ml]. Many brands selling frozen fruit purees are French; look for Ravifruit or Les Vergers Boiron.

How to Toast and Peel Hazelnuts

Place the hazelnuts on a baking tray covered with parchment or aluminum paper, and bake at 350°F [170°C] for 15 minutes, giving the tray a good shake every five minutes. When the hazelnuts' skin is shiny and crackled, remove from the oven and transfer to a clean dish towel. Close the towel up into a bundle and rub the hazelnuts against one another vigorously to remove the skin. Open the towel and pickup the peeled hazelnuts. Some bits of skin will remain but that's ok! Keep the peeled hazelnuts in an airtight container in the fridge until ready to use.

How to Make Coconut Whipped Cream

Makes about 2 cups [500 ml]

Refrigerate 1 can coconut cream or milk, preferably containing 70% coconut extract (approximately 14 oz [414 ml]) overnight (or longer) so the coconut cream hardens and separates from the water. Do not shake the can before opening it! Open the can and scoop the solid coconut cream into the bowl of a stand mixer or into a medium-sized mixing bowl. Discard the leftover water, as you won't use it for this recipe. (Keep it to add flavor to smoothies or soups.) Whip the cream on medium speed for about 2 minutes. Add ¾ cup [180 ml] sifted powdered sugar and beat until fluffy, about 3 minutes more. Add 1 tsp [5 ml] vanilla extract and beat just to incorporate. The prepared coconut whipped cream will store in an airtight container in the fridge for 2 weeks. It will not stiffen when refrigerated; you can enjoy it straight out of the container.

How to Make Italian Meringue (One-Step Method)

Makes about 3 cups [750 ml]

Combine 3 egg whites (room temperature), 1 cup [250 ml] powdered sugar, 1 tbsp [15 ml] water, and ¼ tsp [1.25 ml] cream of tartar in a large heatproof bowl. Set the bowl over a small pot of barely simmering water, making sure the bottom of the bowl doesn't touch the water, and beat with a handheld mixer on low speed for 2 minutes. Increase speed to high and beat until very thick, about another 6 minutes. Remove the bowl from the heat, and keep on beating until the meringue is fluffy and shiny and comes back to room temperature, about 6 minutes more. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator until ready to use. The meringue will keep up to two days.
