

MOM'S SIGNATURE HOLIDAY PIE BARS

— Inspired by my mother's Thanksgiving pie, reimaged into easy, nostalgic bars.

Source: From Scratch Sensations – Holiday Edition

Prep Time: 25–30 min | **Bake Time:** 50–60 minutes

Yield: About 16–20 bars



Recipe Description

These bars are my love letter to the pie my mom baked every Thanksgiving — the one that meant the holiday had truly arrived. A buttery shortbread crust stands in for pastry, topped with a velvety cheesecake layer, a ribbon of melting chocolate chips, and a silky, spiced pumpkin custard. Once chilled and cut into squares, every bite tastes just like her signature holiday pie, now dressed in bar form for potlucks, dessert trays, and quiet late-night slices in the kitchen.

Ingredients

Shortbread Crust

- 1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, softened
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/4 teaspoon salt

Chocolate Layer

- 1 cup semisweet chocolate chips

Pumpkin Custard Layer

- 1 cup pumpkin purée (not pumpkin pie filling)
- 3/4 cup evaporated milk
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 2 large eggs

- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1/4 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/4 teaspoon salt

Directions

1. **Preheat the oven to 350°F (175°C).** Line a 9x9-inch baking pan with parchment so it overhangs the sides for easy lifting.

✿ Inveniam viam aut faciam.

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2. **Prepare the shortbread crust:** In a medium bowl, cream together the softened butter and sugar until smooth. Stir in the flour and salt just until a soft dough forms. Press the dough evenly into the bottom of the prepared pan. Bake for 8–10 minutes, or until the edges look set and the surface is no longer shiny. Set aside to cool slightly while you prepare the next layer.
3. **Make the cheesecake layer:** In a mixing bowl, beat the cream cheese until smooth. Add the sugar, egg, and vanilla and beat until creamy and well combined. Spread the cheesecake mixture gently over the warm shortbread crust, smoothing it into an even layer.
4. **Add the chocolate layer:** Sprinkle the semisweet chocolate chips evenly over the cheesecake layer. They will soften and melt into a ribbon as the bars bake.
5. **Prepare the pumpkin custard:** In a separate bowl, whisk together the pumpkin purée, evaporated milk, sugar, eggs, vanilla, cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, and salt until smooth and well blended.
6. **Pour and bake:** Carefully pour the pumpkin mixture over the chocolate chip layer, tipping the pan gently if needed to help it cover evenly. Do not stir. Return the pan to the oven and bake for 40–50 minutes, or until the pumpkin layer is mostly set with just a slight jiggle in the center.
7. **Cool and chill:** Transfer the pan to a wire rack and cool to room temperature. Refrigerate at least 4 hours, preferably overnight, until the bars are fully chilled and the layers are firm.
8. **Slice and serve:** Use the parchment to lift the chilled slab from the pan onto a cutting board. With a long, sharp knife, cut into squares or rectangles, wiping the blade clean between cuts for neat layers. Serve as is, or with a small dollop of whipped cream and a pinch of cinnamon.

Notes:



- For bars that echo the texture of the original pie, avoid overbaking — remove them when the center still has a gentle wobble.
- These keep well, covered, in the refrigerator for 3–4 days and freeze beautifully (without whipped cream).
- Thaw overnight in the fridge. These bars can be warmed before serving.