



THE WAY THE COOKIE CRUMBLES

A FOOD BLOG

Perfect Lemon Bars (from Cooks Illustrated)

For the crust

1¾ cups (8.75 ounces) unbleached all-purpose flour

⅔ cup confectioners' sugar, plus extra to decorate finished bars

¼ cup cornstarch

¾ teaspoon table salt

12 tablespoons unsalted butter (1 ½ sticks), at very cool room temperature, cut into 1-inch pieces

Lemon filling

4 large eggs, beaten lightly

1⅓ cups (9.33 ounces) granulated sugar

3 tablespoons unbleached all-purpose flour

2 teaspoons grated lemon zest from 2 large lemons

⅔ cup lemon juice from 3 to 4 large lemons, strained

⅓ cup whole milk

⅛ teaspoon table salt

1. For the crust: Adjust an oven rack to middle position and heat the oven to 350 degrees. Lightly oil a 13-by-9-inch baking dish and line with one sheet parchment or wax paper. Dot the paper with butter, then lay a second sheet crosswise over it.
2. Pulse the flour, confectioners' sugar, cornstarch, and salt in the food processor workbowl fitted with the steel blade. Add the butter and process to blend, 8 to 10 seconds, then pulse until the mixture is pale yellow and resembles coarse meal, about three 1-second bursts. (To do this by hand, mix flour, confectioners' sugar, cornstarch, and salt in medium bowl. Freeze the butter and grate it on the large holes of a box grater into the flour mixture. Toss the butter pieces to coat. Rub pieces between your fingers for a minute, until the flour turns pale yellow and coarse.) Sprinkle the mixture into the lined pan and press firmly with fingers into an even, ¼-inch layer over the entire pan bottom and about ½-inch up the sides. Refrigerate for 30 minutes, then bake until the crust is golden brown, about 20 minutes.
3. For the filling: Meanwhile, whisk the eggs, sugar, and flour in a medium bowl, then stir in the lemon zest, juice, milk, and salt to blend well.
4. To finish the bars: Reduce the oven temperature to 325 degrees. Stir the filling mixture to reblend; pour into the warm crust. Bake until the filling feels firm when touched lightly, about 20 minutes. Transfer the pan to a wire rack; cool to near room temperature, at least 30 minutes. Transfer to a cutting board, fold the paper down, and cut into serving-size bars, wiping knife or pizza cutter clean between cuts, as necessary. Sieve confectioners' sugar over bars, if desired.