

CHOCOLATE CARAMEL TOFFEE BARS

These are SOOOOOO good.... get enough to make 2 pans because they go very fast and everyone LOVES them!

INGREDIENTS:

32 Kraft (or other name brand) caramels, unwrapped
1/2 cup (1 stick) REAL butter (salted or unsalted), NOT margarine
1 (14 ounce) can Eagle Brand sweetened condensed (NOT evaporate) milk
1 package Pillsbury Golden Butter Moist Supreme yellow cake mix
1/3 cup Wesson vegetable or canola oil
2 large eggs
1 (12 ounce) package Nestle (or other brand name, not generic or store brand) milk chocolate CHUNKS (not chips)
1 cup Nestle (or other brand name, not generic or store brand) WHITE chocolate chips
1 cup Heath Toffee Bits (Bits-o-Brickle)

DIRECTIONS:

Preheat your oven to 350 degrees.

1. Unwrap the caramels and put them in a microwaveable bowl.
2. Add the butter and sweetened condensed milk to bowl with caramels and set aside.
3. In a large bowl, combine cake mix, oil and eggs, blending well (batter will be very thick).
4. In a separate bowl, combine chips, chunks and toffee bits and mix well.
5. With a very sturdy (wooden or bamboo work best) spatula, stir chocolate chunks, white chips and toffee bits into the cake batter.
6. Dough is VERY sticky, so it is best if you can refrigerate it for 30 - 60 minutes before proceeding, but you don't have to.
7. Press half of the mixture into the bottom of a greased 9" x 13" pan. Once finished, return remainder of mixture to refrigerator. A good silicone spatula will help you press the dough into the pan.
8. Bake at 350 degrees for 10 minutes on the middle rack.
9. While crust is baking, melt the caramel mixture in the microwave in 30-second

(HIGH/MAX power setting) increments, stirring after each cycle and until caramels are melted and mixture is smooth.

10. Remove crust from oven and SLOWLY pour caramel mixture over hot crust.
11. Top with reserved crust mixture – it's really thick, so I just take chunks of the mixture and break it up over the caramel filling - no need (do not) press down into the caramel - it will spread out and cover the top during baking.
12. Bake an additional 18 - 25 minutes or until top is set and edges are a golden brown. Be careful not to over-bake - edges should just be a little past golden brown and center will still be a little bit jiggly. With my oven, I have found that 18-20 minutes is just about perfect.
13. Cool for 20 minutes and then run a sharp knife around edges of the pan to loosen the bars.
14. Cool completely - probably an hour or more, then cut into bars. After I cut them, I refrigerate them for an hour or so before I remove them from the pan, but this isn't necessary.

TIPS:

White chocolate chips can be expensive, so if you plan on baking a lot of these, check Sam's or Costco to see if they have the large bags of Nestle's White Chocolate Chips - sometimes they have them and sometimes they don't - it depends on the store and the time of year. I really prefer Ghirardelli brand chips as they taste the best. You can usually get them at Walmart for about \$2.50 per bag which is competitive with Nestle's. Hershey's chips are good, too. I strongly advise AGAINST using store brand or any other generic brand white chocolate chips - I have tried several and they all had a very strange, artificial taste. Also, do not be tempted to buy the blocks of cheap white chocolate (or almond bark) with the intentions of chopping them up for use in the cookies - these are usually a different consistency than the chips and don't work well in cookies and are usually designed to be melted for dipping items into it. Sometimes you can find white chocolate chunks in bags, usually from Nestle's, and these are okay to use, too.

Why chocolate CHUNKS instead of chips?? I've started using chocolate CHUNKS exclusively because they don't have the additives like the chips and they melt better. I've only found them in larger stores, though, such as Walmart. As with the white chocolate chips, only buy name-brand chips or chunks like Hershey's, Nestle, or Ghirardelli.

I have not tried other brand cake mixes, but I suspect they would work as long as you get the "moist" variety.

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