

## Baker 17 - Judith Smith

### Lemon Squares, French Style

Story:

Ingredients:

#### Notes on Timing:

1. The filling needs 2-3 hours in the fridge to cool and thicken - it can easily be made the day before or up to two weeks before if is stored in air tight container.
2. The cookie base needs to cool to room temperature after it is pre-baked and before it is filled. This can take anywhere from 45 minutes to an hour depending on the temperature of your kitchen (can also be put in the fridge if you want to speed it up).
3. The bars need to cool for a minimum of 2 hours and up to 6 after they come out of the oven and before they are cut.

#### Ingredients

Filling:

4 large local eggs (I use Wilcox)

1 1/2 cups (300 grams) sugar

Finely grated zest of one lemon

2/3 cup (158 ml) freshly squeezed lemon juice (2-3 lemons -4-5 if they are small).

2 sticks plus 2 T (9 oz or 255 grams) unsalted butter cut into small pieces.

Crust and Crumbs

2 sticks plus 2 tablespoons (9 ounces; 255 grams) of unsalted butter at room temperature

1 1/4 cup (250 grams) sugar

1/2 teaspoon fine sea salt

1 t vanilla extract

3/4 cup (75 grams) Bob's Red Mill fine almond flour. (I like the fine grain almond flour as I think it mixes in better)

2 1/3 cups (317 grams) Sherperds Grain or Carin Springs all purpose flour

1/3 cup (43 grams) coarsely chopped slivered almonds or finely chopped blanched whole almonds

**To make the filling:**

4. Use heavy-bottomed medium saucepan, whisk eggs and sugar together in the pan until well blended. Whisk in the zest and lemon juice then drop in the chunks of butter.
2. Put the saucepan over medium heat then start whisking, taking care to work the whisk into the edges of the pan. If your whisk is too big to get into the edges, switch to a wooden spoon or silicone spatula. Whisk without stopping until the curd begins to thicken (8-10 minutes).
3. It won't get terribly thick but it should leave a mark across the back of the wooden spoon if you run your finger across it or the whisk on lower speeds should leave tracks. The sign that the curd is ready is a bubble or two burbling to the surface and popping. You don't want to get it to a full boil. Immediately remove from heat and pour into a heat proof bowl.
4. Place in the fridge and place plastic against the surface of it. Leave in fridge until cold all the way through (2-3 hours).

**When ready to bake:**

Center rack in the middle of the oven and preheat to 375 degrees. Butter a 9-X-13 baking pan, line with parchment or oven proof wax paper and butter the paper.

**To make the crust:**

1. Put the butter, sugar, salt and vanilla in a food processor and whirl until the mixture is blended (Can also use a Kitchen Aide with the flat paddle or hand held mixer using the lower speeds). Add the almond flour and blend until smooth.
2. Add the flour and pulse, stopping as needed to scrape the bowl until you've worked the flour into the other ingredients and have moist bumpy curds of dough. If the dough holds together when you pinch it, it's ready.
3. Turn dough onto the counter and knead it gently to gather it together. Cut off one third of the dough, cover it with plastic wrap and set aside (can be refrigerated if your kitchen is warm). Press the rest of the dough evenly into the pan. You can use a small smooth sided glass as a mini-rolling pin to make this easier and smoother. Prick it all over with a fork
4. Bake the crust for 15-18 minutes. Check it half way - rotate the pan and if it has puffed up, gently prick again with fork. Bake until pale golden all over and is soft to the touch. Transfer the pan to a cooling rack and let cool to room temperature
5. Stir the curd to get it moving and then use a long, off-set spatula or the back of a large spoon to spread the filling all over the crust. Pinch off small pieces of the saved dough and scatter them over the surface - you should be able to almost completely cover the curd. Finish by scattering the chopped almonds evenly over the surface.

6. Bake the lemon bars for 35-45 minutes - rotating the pan after 20 minutes. The lemon curd will puff - it should puff all the way to the center and will caramelize around the edges. The crumbs and almonds on the top should be a golden brown when finished.

7. Transfer pan to a cooling rack and cool for a minimum of 2 hours and up to 6 before cutting.

8. Run a table knife around the edges of the pan and make sure it goes all the way down the crust. You can test to see if you have cut it completely by pushing the knife in between the pan and bars and see if there is some give.

9. Turn the bars over onto a cutting board or rack -by placing the cutting board over the top of the pan and flipping it over - can tap it if it doesn't come out right away or flip it back over and make sure the knife has cut all the through between the bars and the pan. Remove the parchment paper. Once out, re-invert onto a cutting board by placing a cutting board over the surface and flip over so the top is now facing up again.

10. Using a slender knife, cut into squares. (Or rectangles). This makes 24 bars that are about 2 inches on a side but can be made smaller ( 1 X 1 1/2 inches). For the smaller size, I believe ten will fit the size box listed for the cookie donation.