



Christmas Cookie Bars Guide

My Kitchen Counter Christmas

Every December, my kitchen counter becomes a party. I lay out bowls of chocolate chips, pretzels, and bright candies. My grandkids call it the “cookie bar buffet.” We all get to choose our favorite mix-ins. Doesn’t that sound more fun than one plain cookie?

I love this recipe because it brings everyone together. You don’t need to make perfect little dough balls. You just press everything into one pan. This matters because it leaves more time for laughing and tasting. What is your must-have cookie mix-in? Tell me in the comments!

The Secret is in the Butter

Let’s talk about butter. You will melt it. This is the key to a chewy, rich

bar. But here is my little story. One year, I got too excited. I melted the butter until it was bubbling hot.

I poured it right into the sugar. Can you guess what happened? It started to cook the eggs! I got greasy, funny-looking bars. I still laugh at that. So let your melted butter cool for a minute. It should not be steaming. This small step matters so much for the perfect texture.

A Dough for Everything

This dough is your best friend. It holds all the good stuff you can dream up. I use a spatula to mix, not a big mixer. It feels more gentle. You just stir until the flour disappears.

Now, the fun part. You need two cups of mix-ins total. My recipe uses five kinds. The salty pretzels with sweet caramel is my favorite bite. *Fun fact: The extra egg yolk in the dough makes it extra tender and rich.* Do you like your treats more chewy or more crunchy?

Patience for Perfect Bars

After baking, the hardest part begins. You must let the pan cool completely. I know, the smell is amazing. It fills the whole house with Christmas.

But if you cut too soon, the bars will fall apart. Waiting lets them set up right. This matters for neat, beautiful squares. I set the pan on a rack and walk away. Maybe I wrap a gift or two. What do you do while you wait for treats to cool?

See also Peanut Butter Snowdrift Sandwich Cookies

Share the Joy

These bars are made for sharing. You can cut them big or small. I pack them in tins for my neighbors. They keep fresh for a few days in a tight container.

Food is about more than eating. It is a way to say, “I’m thinking of you.” That is the lesson my own grandma taught me. A simple bar can hold so much love. I hope you try this recipe with someone you care about.

Ingredients:

Ingredient	Amount	Notes
Unsalted butter	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup (1 $\frac{1}{2}$ sticks)	Melted, not margarine
Light brown sugar	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup	
Granulated sugar	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	
Egg + yolk	1 large egg + 1 extra yolk	
Vanilla extract	2 teaspoons	
Baking soda	1 teaspoon	
Baking powder	$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon	
Salt	$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon	
All-purpose flour	2 cups	Can add an extra $\frac{1}{4}$ cup if dough is too runny
Mix-Ins (2 cups total)		
Semi-sweet chocolate chips	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	
Red & green M&M's	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	
Pretzels	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	Broken into pieces

Ingredient	Amount	Notes
Chewy caramels (e.g., Kraft)	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	Chopped into smaller pieces
Holiday sprinkles (jimmies)	2 tablespoons	



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Hello, my dear. Come sit at the counter. Let's make my famous Christmas Cookie Bars. They are my favorite holiday treat. I call them my "Everything Nice" bars. Doesn't that smell amazing? They have all the best bits from the cookie jar. You get chocolate, caramel, pretzels, and colorful candies in every bite. I still laugh at the year my grandson, Leo, ate all the green M&M's first. We had very red bars that Christmas! Making them is simple. You just stir and press. No rolling pins or cookie cutters needed.

Instructions

Step 1: First, warm your oven to 350°F. Now, let's chop those chewy caramels. Make them into little bits. This helps them melt just right in the bars. I use kitchen scissors for this. It's much easier than a knife. My tip? Spray your scissors with a little oil first. (The caramel won't stick as much this way).

Step 2: Melt the butter in a big bowl. Just until it's liquid. Let it cool if it steams. We don't want scrambled eggs in our dough! Stir in both sugars with a spatula. Then add the whole egg, the extra yolk, and the vanilla. Stir it all until it looks like smooth, pale sand.

See also Linzertorte Holiday Star

Step 3: Sprinkle in the baking soda, baking powder, and salt. Give it a good stir. Now, add the flour. Mix until the white disappears. The dough will be thick and lovely. What do you think the extra egg yolk does? Share below!

Step 4: Time for the fun part! Dump in all your mix-ins. Chocolate chips, M&M's, pretzel pieces, caramel bits, and sprinkles. Stir them all through the dough. This is the "everything nice" I told you about. (If your dough feels too sticky, add that extra $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of flour).

Step 5: Press the dough into your prepared pan. Make the top nice and even. You can press a few extra candies on top. It makes them look so festive. Now, bake them for about 18 minutes. The edges will be golden. Let them cool completely in the pan. This is the hardest part, waiting!

Creative Twists

You can change up the mix-ins so easily. Use what you love. Here are some of my favorite twists. **Peppermint Bliss:** Use white chocolate chips and crushed candy canes. **Nutty Elf:** Swap the pretzels for chopped, salty peanuts. **Fruity Joy:** Try dried cranberries and white chocolate instead. Which one would you try first? Comment below!

Serving & Pairing Ideas

These bars are a party on a plate. Serve them on a big platter for sharing. A little dusting of powdered sugar looks like snow. For a cozy night, pair a warm bar with a scoop of vanilla ice cream. The cold and warm together is magic. For drinks, a glass of cold milk is always perfect. Grown-ups might like a sweet cream sherry with theirs. It's a lovely, old-fashioned pairing. Which would you choose tonight?



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Keeping Your Cookie Bars Happy

Let's talk about keeping these bars fresh. First, let them cool completely. I learned this the hard way. I once wrapped warm bars in plastic. The next day, they were soggy. No one wants a soggy cookie bar.

See also [Raspberry Almond Christmas Torte Cookies](#)

Store them in an airtight container. They will stay soft for about three days. You can also freeze them for a month. Wrap squares tightly in plastic wrap first. Then pop them in a freezer bag.

Batch cooking saves so much time during the holidays. Making a double batch means one for now, one for later. This matters because it gives you more time for joy. You can share with friends without stress. Have you ever tried storing it this way? Share below!

Simple Fixes for Common Hiccups

Sometimes our baking doesn't go as planned. That's okay. Here are three common issues and easy fixes. First, greasy bars. This happens if your melted butter is too hot. Let it cool until it's just warm. I remember when I rushed this step. My bars were a bit oily.

Second, runny dough. If your dough seems too wet, add a little extra flour. Start with a tablespoon. Mix it in and see how it feels. Getting the dough right matters for the perfect texture. It builds your kitchen confidence.

Third, over-baked edges. All ovens are different. Check your bars at 16

minutes. The center should look set, not wet. This matters because a perfect bake means a soft, chewy center. Which of these problems have you run into before?

Your Quick Questions, Answered

Q: Can I make these gluten-free? A: Yes! Use a good gluten-free flour blend. Make sure it has xanthan gum in it.

Q: Can I make the dough ahead? A: You can. Press it into the pan, cover it, and chill. Bake it the next day.

Q: What are good ingredient swaps? A: Use any chips or candies you love. Butterscotch chips are a favorite of mine. *Fun fact: The first chocolate chip cookie was made by accident!*

Q: Can I make a smaller batch? A: Absolutely. Just cut all the ingredients in half. Use an 8x8 inch pan instead.

Q: Any optional tips? A: A pinch of cinnamon in the dough is lovely. It adds a cozy, warm flavor. Which tip will you try first?

From My Kitchen to Yours

I hope you love making these festive bars. Baking is about sharing joy and making memories. My kitchen is always a little messy afterwards. But the smiles are worth every sprinkle.

I would love to hear about your baking adventure. Tell me all about it in the comments below. Have you tried this recipe? Did your family enjoy them? Your stories make my day brighter.

Happy cooking!

—Elowen Thorn.



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