Prep Time: 25 minutes
Cook Time: 30 minutes
Chilling Time: 2 hours
Total Time: 2 hours 55 minutes

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Ingredients

For the Shortbread Base:

- 1 ¼ cups (155g) all-purpose flour
- ½ cup (100g) granulated sugar
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup (115g) unsalted butter, cold and cubed

For the Caramel & Peanut Layer:

- ½ cup (115g) unsalted butter
- ½ cup (100g) light brown sugar, packed
- ¼ cup (60ml) heavy cream
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ½ teaspoon flaky sea salt
- 1 ½ cups (210g) roasted, salted peanuts, roughly chopped

For the Chocolate Topping:

- 1 ½ cups (255g) dark chocolate chips (60-70% cacao)
- 2 tablespoons (30g) unsalted butter
- 1 teaspoon flaky sea salt, for sprinkling

Instructions

Part 1: The Shortbread Base (Intensity: Low)

1. Preheat & Prepare: Preheat your oven to 350°F (175°C). Line an 8×8-inch (20×20 cm) square baking pan with parchment paper, leaving an overhang on the sides for easy removal.

2. Combine Dry Ingredients: In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, sugar, and salt.

3. Cut in Butter: Add the cold, cubed butter to the dry ingredients. Using a pastry blender or your fingertips, work the butter into the flour mixture until it resembles coarse, sandy crumbs.

4. Press & Bake: Transfer the crumbly mixture to the prepared pan. Press it firmly and evenly into the bottom to create a compact layer. Bake for 20-22 minutes, or until the edges are a light golden brown. Remove from the oven and let it cool completely on a wire rack while you prepare the caramel.

Part 2: The Caramel & Peanut Layer (Intensity: Medium-High)

1. Melt Butter & Sugar: In a medium saucepan over medium heat, combine the butter, brown sugar, and heavy cream. Stir constantly with a wooden spoon or silicone spatula until the butter is melted and the sugar has dissolved.

2. Boil: Once the mixture begins to bubble, stop stirring and let it boil for exactly 1 minute. This is a crucial step for achieving the right texture.

3. Add Flavorings: Remove the pan from the heat immediately. Stir in the vanilla extract and flaky sea salt. The mixture will bubble up vigorously.

4. Add Peanuts: Fold in the chopped roasted peanuts until they are fully coated in the caramel.

5. Assemble: Pour the hot caramel-peanut mixture over the cooled shortbread base, spreading it into an even layer with a spatula. Work quickly, as the caramel will begin to set as it cools. Place the pan in the refrigerator to allow the caramel to firm up for at least 30 minutes.

Part 3: The Chocolate Topping (Intensity: Low)

1. Melt Chocolate: In a heatproof bowl set over a saucepan of barely simmering water (a double boiler), or in the microwave in 30-second intervals, melt the dark chocolate chips and butter together. Stir until the mixture is completely smooth and glossy.

2. Pour & Spread: Pour the melted chocolate over the chilled caramel-peanut layer. Use an offset spatula or the back of a spoon to spread it into a smooth, even layer.

3. Finish: Immediately sprinkle the remaining flaky sea salt over the top of the chocolate.

Part 4: Chilling & Cutting (Intensity: Low)

1. Chill: Return the pan to the refrigerator and chill for at least 1.5 to 2 hours, or until the chocolate is completely set and the bars are firm.

2. Cut: Once fully chilled, use the parchment paper overhang to lift the entire block out of the pan and place it on a cutting board. Using a sharp knife, cut into 16 squares. For the cleanest cuts, wipe the knife with a warm, damp cloth between each cut.

Storage: Store the bars in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to one week. They can also be frozen for up to 2 months.

Nutrition Information

Note: Nutritional information is an estimate and is provided for informational purposes only. It is calculated per serving (1 bar) based on the recipe yielding 16 bars.

- Serving Size: 1 bar
- Calories: ~310
- Total Fat: 21g (11g saturated fat)
- Cholesterol: 25mg
- Sodium: 150mg
- Total Carbohydrates: 26g (2g fiber, 18g sugars)
- Protein: 5g