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Lemon Bars

by [John Kanell](#) · Updated Oct 23, 2020[89 Comments](#)

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You'll love these bright and zingy lemon bars with a crisp shortbread crust and luscious lemon filling. Beyond easy to make and oh so delicious!





Lemon bars are one of the **EASIEST** desserts to make but they're guaranteed to bring a smile to your face. I love the soft lemon filling paired with a crisp shortbread crust and the flavor is beyond delicious; so bright and zingy with all the lemon flavor from

the juice and zest, they're simply irresistible!

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WHAT YOU'LL NEED FOR THIS RECIPE





Lemons: Fresh lemons, not from a bottle. I've had a questions about using other citrus fruit and that is totally fine. Try subbing in some orange juice and zest.

Butter: I always specify unsalted butter just because different manufacturers add various amounts of salt to salted butter. The best way to have uniform results from a recipe is to use unsalted butter then add however much salt you need separately. **If**

you don't have unsalted butter then go ahead and use salted butter! Just omit the extra salt.

HOW TO MAKE LEMON BARS



1. Set oven to **350F** and line a 9×13 inch baking dish with parchment paper. Sift the flour, salt, and powdered sugar into a bowl and whisk together.

2. Pour in the *melted butter*. You can also make the shortbread crust in a stand mixer fitted with a paddle attachment, there's less elbow grease needed and the paddle tends to break the dough into smaller pieces that are easier to spread in the pan. You may want to add an optional teaspoon of vanilla if you love it in everything like I do.



3. Use a wooden spoon or spatula to mix in the batter. If you're doing this by hand then I suggest crumbling the dough in your fingers after mixing.

4. Spread the dough out onto the lined baking pan and press down with your fingers. Try to get a nice even layer with full coverage on the bottom. It doesn't have to be a thick layer at all, just a base for the lemon filling. Bake at 350 for about 20 minutes or until a light golden color. I like to add an extra five minutes for a crisp golden base but it's all personal taste.



5. Add the sugar to your food processor then grate in the zest of three lemons. Pulse, pulse, pulse until the zest is fully incorporated.

6. When you're done the sugar will be a beautiful light yellow color and quite fragrant. If you don't have a processor try mincing the zest and mixing it in a plastic bag with the sugar. Lemon-infused sugar is truly amazing!



7. Juice the lemons until you get a **full cup (240mL)** I will confess to usually adding a bit more lemon so if you want to add a few extra tablespoons-1/4 cup then go ahead.

8. Add the lemon sugar, and remaining **1/2 cup flour** to a large bowl. You can sift the

flour and sugar together if you're super-concerned about lumps but you'll need to dump out any zesty sugar bits.



9. Give the mixture a good whisk to really distribute the flour.

10. Add the eggs and lemon juice then give it a really good whisk, you want to make sure the flour and sugar is fully incorporated with the lemon and eggs.



11. Pour the filling onto the warm shortcrust base. I like to place the pan on a larger baking sheet so it's easier to place in the oven and remove. Bake for about **25 minutes at 350F** or until the center is just set. Rotate pan halfway through baking.

13. Allow the lemon bars to cool for at least an hour, then transfer to the refrigerator to **chill** for another two hours. Once chilled, remove from pan and peel away the parchment paper. I always dust with powdered sugar for a little visual contrast but that's optional. Use a **SHARP damp knife** to cut the bars. Clean the knife after each

cut and re-wet for the neatest cuts.



PRO TIPS FOR THIS RECIPE

- ALWAYS use **fresh lemon juice!** Lemons are the star ingredient so you don't want to do the from concentrate or a bottle versions.
- Line your baking dish. The parchment paper makes it very easy to remove from the pan but in a pinch you can use foil instead.
- Don't worry if your bars seem not quite done when you pull them from the oven. They will continue to set as they cool.
- Lemon bars are a great make ahead dessert. Cut then freeze on a baking try. Wrap individually and store in your freezer for up to three months. Thaw and dust with powdered sugar before serving.
- *Don't rush the chill time;* you need it for the bars to set up.





FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

DO I NEED TO REFRIGERATE THEM?

If you're leaving lemon bars out for more than a few hours they should be refrigerated. Luckily they're delicious served chilled or at room temperature.

HOW DO I KNOW IF THEY ARE SET?

You'll know your lemon bars are done when the center doesn't really jiggle and the edge is set. As the bars cool the filling in the middle will set. Follow the proscribed baking time but if the bars seem runny you can give them a few more minutes.

CAN LEMON BARS BE MADE A DAY AHEAD?

YES! These are a great make ahead dessert. Just bake and chill then cut before serving. It will actually be easier to cut them cleanly if you make them the day before.

HOW DO YOU CUT THEM CLEANLY?

Use a sharp knife. Dampen before cutting and make sure to clean the blade off after each cut. Use one downward motion to cut through. If the top seems a bit sticky or tough you can pre score the top with a very sharp knife or razor blade before cutting.

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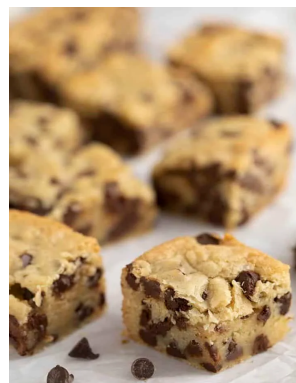
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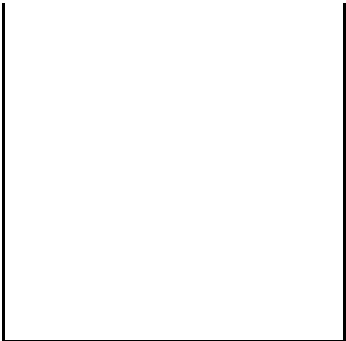
Lemon Bars

These bright and zingy lemon bars are easy to make and so delicious!

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-  **Course** Dessert
-  **Cuisine** American, British, english
-  **Prep Time** 20 minutes
-  **Cook Time** 55 minutes
-  **Total Time** 4 hours 15 minutes
-  **Servings** 15 Bars
-  **Calories** 385kcal
-  **Author** [John Kanell](#)





4.97 from 4287 votes

 **Prep Time** 20 minutes

 **Cook Time** 55 minutes

 **Total Time** 4 hours 15 minutes

 **Servings** 15 Bars

 **Chill Time** 3 hours

Video

Equipment

- ☐ 9x13 pan
- ☐ Food Processor

Ingredients

- ☐ 3 cups all-purpose flour 360g, divided 2 1/2 cups for crust and 1/2 cup for filling
- ☐ 2/3 cups powdered sugar 66g, for the shortbread, plus more for dusting
- ☐ 1/2 tsp salt
- ☐ 12 tbsp unsalted butter melted, 170g
- ☐ 3 tbsp lemon zest zest of three lemons
- ☐ 3 cups sugar 600g
- ☐ 8 eggs large, room temperature
- ☐ 1 cup lemon juice fresh, 240mL

Instructions

1. Heat oven to 350F and line a 9x13 baking dish with parchment paper.
2. Whisk together 2 1/2 cups of flour (300g) with the powdered sugar and salt, then pour in the melted butter and mix until combined. You can also do this using a stand mixer with a paddle attachment. If you'd like a dash of vanilla can be added in with the butter at this step.
3. Sprinkle the dough into your lined pan and press down into a flat layer. Bake at 350F for about 20 minutes or until a light golden color.
4. While the crust is baking add the sugar to a food processor and add the zest of three lemons. Pulse until the zest is fully incorporated and sugar is a light yellow color. If you don't have a processor just mince the zest and mix with the sugar in a bag or bowl.

5. Add the sugar and remaining half cup of flour to a large bowl and mix well. You can sift together however and zesty sugar bits will need to get dumped out of the sifter as they might clog things up and not go through.
6. Pour in the lemon juice and add the eggs then mix very well until completely combined.
7. Pour the filling onto the warm crust then transfer to oven and bake for about 25 minutes, turning halfway through the bake. Remove from oven and allow to cool for an hour before chilling in the refrigerator for two hours.
8. Dust with powdered sugar and cut into bars using a clean, sharp, damp knife. Clean and re-wet the knife after each cut.

Notes

- ALWAYS use fresh lemon juice! Lemons are the star ingredient so you don't want to go the from concentrate or a bottle versions.
- Line your baking dish. The parchment paper makes it very easy to remove from the pan but in a pinch you can use foil instead.
- Don't worry if your bars seem not quite done when you pull them from the oven. They will continue to set as they cool.
- Lemon bars are a great make ahead dessert. Cut then freeze on a baking try. Wrap individually and store in your freezer for up to three months. That and dust with powdered sugar before serving.

Nutrition

Serving: 1bar | Calories: 385kcal | Carbohydrates: 66g | Protein: 6g | Fat: 12g | Saturated Fat: 7g | Cholesterol: 111mg | Sodium: 113mg | Potassium: 79mg | Fiber: 1g | Sugar: 46g | Vitamin A: 407IU | Vitamin C: 8mg | Calcium: 22mg | Iron: 2mg

*[Nutrition Disclaimer](#)



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COMMENTS

JesusIsSavior! says

May 11, 2026 at 11:09 pm

Great recipe, thank you

[Reply.](#)

Sarah says

March 26, 2026 at 12:30 pm

I love all of John's recipes and this one is included! I did modify the recipe the second time I made them to suit my family's tastes but the original recipe was a hit too! Second time around I browned the butter for the crust. I cut out one cup of sugar and increased the zest to four tablespoons. I also don't have a food processor so mine isn't as vibrant yellow, I'm. It sure if that's what caused it.

[Reply.](#)

Antonela says

March 24, 2026 at 12:45 pm

These lemon bars are the best! The flavours are perfectly balanced. They are rich yet refreshing at the same time.

[Reply.](#)

Sofia Haji says

February 27, 2026 at 7:39 am

Best recipe ever, I've made several times

[Reply.](#)

Portobello says

February 23, 2026 at 6:33 pm

I just made these lemon bars. I think they were a bit sweet so the next time I would try only using 2 1/2 c of sugar instead of 3 cups.

[Reply.](#)

Jennifer Glassel says

February 09, 2026 at 8:11 am

Delicious!!

[Reply.](#)

Ira D. Cochran says

January 29, 2026 at 1:06 pm

I had an abundance of fresh Lemons from my garden this year and was looking for a tasty receipt to try. This Lemon Bar receipt did not dissappoint. What a find; they were easy to make and delicious. I definently recommend this one.

[Reply.](#)

Maggie says

January 28, 2026 at 7:35 am

Really easy and beyond delicious!

[Reply](#).

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I'm John Kanell, founder of Preppy Kitchen. As a **two-time *New York Times* Bestselling cookbook author** and former math and science teacher, I'm obsessed with creating beautiful, foolproof recipes. My team and I are **dedicated to rigorous testing**, so

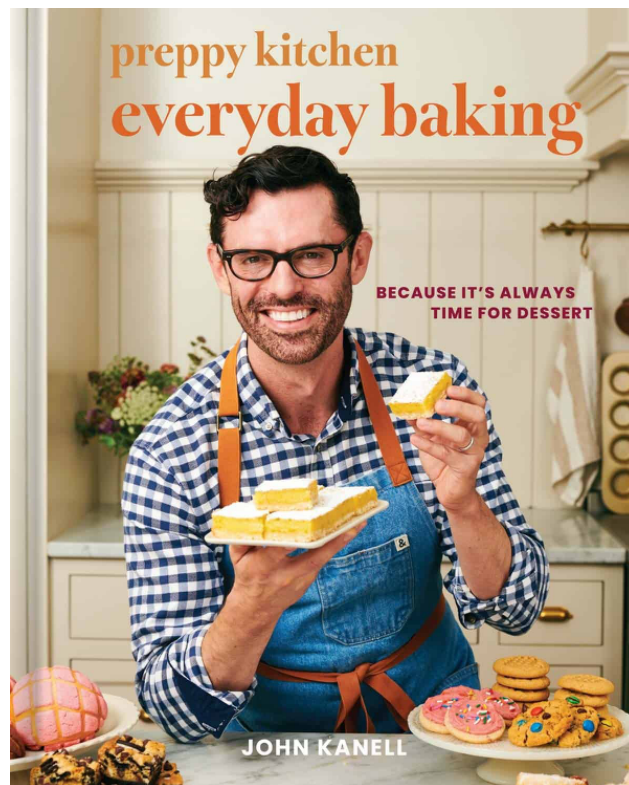
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