

Christmas Muesli & Prune Bars.

This is what we have for Christmas at our hotel and sell at Christmas markets – a crunchy, cakey, bar with sticky prune jam in the middle topped with a maple syrup fudge topping, with nuts and seeds. LOVELY

12 large or 24 small bars:

For the Prune Jam:

300g Pitted prunes cut in half.

250g jam sugar

200ml water

The rind half of a lemon, sliced off with a potato peeler.

The juice of a whole lemon

For the cake mix:

250g hot melted butter – completely melted in the microwave or over a low heat in a saucepan.

350g Porridge oats.

200g Golden caster sugar

150g self-raising flour

Topping:

200g maple syrup

125g butter

Pinch of salt.

50g pumpkin seeds

50g dried cranberries or chopped dried cherries

30g sliced toasted almonds (roasted in a 190°C, Oven for 3 to 5 minutes until roasted).

30g un-toasted almonds.



Preheat oven to 190°C, 375°F, Gas mark 5.

You need a non-stick baking or brownie pan – 32cm L X 18cm W X 3cm D. Grease thoroughly with butter and dust with flour, or buttered baking parchment, for ease in turning out.

For the jam; put all the jam ingredients, for the filling, into a saucepan and bring to the boil. Stir the fruit and juice around a few times, reduce the heat to boil the mixture for 5 minutes. Then pour the filling mixture into a glass bowl to cool. Remove the lemon rind. Ensure the jam is absolutely cold (and is a jam).

For the cake mix; melt the butter in a large mixing bowl in the microwave, add the sugar. Mix in the flour, and the porridge oats, so that the butter and sugar covers everything and the whole lot is thoroughly mixed in. Spoon out half the mixture into the baking pan and flatten equally over the bottom using a pallet knife. Press down the mixture, into the corners, check it is the same thickness. Now spread over the prune jam evenly over the cake mix. Spread the rest of the cake mixture over the top of the jam and flatten out gently compacting the mixture - but too much - but ensuring and even spread. Place in the middle shelf of the oven and bake for 30 to 35 minutes.

For the topping; pour the maple syrup into a wide-bottom saucepan and bring to boiling point, stirring all the time and bubble for 5 minutes till the mixture thickens slightly and darkens to a caramel-type mixture, then stir in the butter and allow it to melt, stirring all the time. Mix the dried fruit, seeds and almonds together and mmix into the maple syrup fudge-mix. When cake mixture is baked, pour over the fudge topping mixture over the top of the cake, spread over equally. Ensure the fruit, seeds and nuts are evenly spread over the surface of the cake and pat down into the cake with a wooden spoon. Allow it to cool in the baking tray. The mixture will firm up as it cools, ready for cutting into bars or squares. I find it easier to put the cake into the fridge before cutting up.