

SARAH'S BROWNIE PROTEIN BARS

MAKES 16 BARS

Counts per bar: 300 calories, 16 g protein, 18 g carbs, 3.5 g fiber, 20 g of GOOD fat

INGREDIENTS (for pre-measurement of future batches)

- 2 tsp baking powder
- 4 scoops whey protein powder of choice (chocolate, vanilla, or unflavored—for a long time I used the Body Fortress brand in either chocolate or vanilla. I've recently switched to Vitacost's unflavored whey protein and Mark hasn't noticed a difference in taste)
- ½ cup brown sugar
- ½ cup regular sugar (I've also used sucanat, coconut sugar, or 2 tbs stevia instead)
- ½ cup flaxseed meal (I use Bob's Red Mill organic golden)
- 1 cup almond flour (can use all-purpose or whole wheat flour, but you will add 32 g carbs, decrease the fiber count, and you will end up with a dense cake-like texture instead of brownie-like)
- 1 tsp salt (sea salt, table salt, Himalayan...whatever...I buy Himalayan in bulk & use it for everything)
- 2 tbs cocoa powder, unsweetened

OTHER INGREDIENTS

- 2 very ripe bananas
- 2 cups old-fashioned oats OR steel-cut oats
- 2 cups almond milk (unsweetened, original or vanilla) Regular milk works just fine—I just prefer almond.
- 4 large eggs
- 1 tbs vanilla extract
- 2/3 cup peanut butter (I normally use Peter Pan or Jif crunchy, but any brand/kind will work)
- 2/3 cup coconut oil
- OPTIONAL TOPPINGS: ½ cup nuts and/or chocolate chips of choice (not included in the counts per bar. I always top with chocolate chips, dark if I have them.)

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350F.
2. Using stovetop or the microwave, cook the oats in the almond milk.
3. Mash the banana in a large mixing bowl. Add the warm oats/milk, eggs, vanilla, coconut oil, and peanut butter. Mix well.
 - I used a wooden spoon for everything for a year. I got a Kitchen Aide standing mixer as a gift, and have been throwing everything in that instead and it's been awesome--the bars are also turning out with a richer, gooier texture. So, if you are blessed with a standing mixer, USE IT, otherwise I now recommend a hand mixer over just a spoon.
 - After a few times making this, I stopped measuring the peanut butter and coconut oil (which was a pain) and started eye-balling it instead.
 - Don't wait for the oats/milk to cool to mix--the heat helps the coconut oil and peanut butter melt and blend in.
4. Add the rest of the dry ingredients--(everything that can be pre-measured) and continue to mix until you see no banana lumps. Oat lumps are fine.
5. Spray full-sized glass pan with cooking oil spray (don't forget this part...I forgot once and will never forget again). Pour in the batter. Sprinkle chocolate chips or nuts on top, if desired, or melt the chocolate chips and drizzle on top. Personally, the chocolate chips make these awesome.
6. Bake uncovered for 22-25 minutes; begin testing with a toothpick or fork @ 22 minutes. If it's slightly gooey in the middle, that's ok—this stuff is better slightly under-baked than it is over-baked. I ended up taking mine out after 24 min.
7. Allow to cool *completely* before cutting into bars. Sometimes I cover and allow them to chill overnight in the fridge. Wrap each individually in plastic wrap or plastic baggies and store in the freezer. Best eaten within 24 hours after removing from freezer. Unwrap and microwave 20-30 seconds to warm, if desired.