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Maple-Cinnamon Granola Bars

Makes 8 bars

Have you noticed how tiny the store-bought granola bars have gotten? Just like fresh-baked cookies or breads, your homemade granola bars will blow away the packaged ones. Make a batch for breakfast, although you may find that they disappear at all hours of the day.

1 cup old-fashioned rolled oats
1/2 cup crisped brown rice cereal
1/4 cup whole wheat flour
1/4 cup brown sugar
1/4 cup soy protein powder or nonfat powdered milk
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup peanut butter
1/2 cup maple syrup
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 tablespoons canola oil

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Lightly oil an 8-inch square baking pan. In a large bowl, mix the oats, rice cereal, flour, brown sugar, soy powder, cinnamon, and salt. In a small bowl or food processor, whisk together or process the peanut butter, maple syrup, vanilla, and canola oil until smooth. Stir the wet mixture into the dry one, and use your hands to combine them thoroughly.

Scrape the mixture into the prepared pan, and use wet hands to pat it evenly into the pan. Bake for 20 minutes. Using a bench knife or stiff metal spatula, cut into 8 bars by dividing it into 4 one way, then cutting it in half in the other direction. Put the pan back in the oven for 5 minutes. The bars should be golden brown. Let cool completely, then carefully cut the bars apart and separate them from the edges of the pan before removing. Store in a tightly closed tub or bag for up to a week, or freeze for a month.