
*Recipes from **Luscious Lemon Desserts** by Lori Longbotham. Published by Chronicle Books, San Francisco, CA. Reprinted with permission of the publisher. All rights reserved.*

Shortbread with Lemon Curd Bars

These cookies are a combination of two of my all-time favorite things – shortbread and lemon curd. They last longer than you would think, at least 4 days in the refrigerator, and the crust never gets soggy. Makes 16 bars.

1 cup all-purpose flour
1/4 cup packed dark brown sugar
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup (1 stick) chilled unsalted butter, cut into small pieces
1 cup **Lemon Curd** (below) or store-bought lemon curd, chilled
Confectioners' sugar for dusting

1. Position a rack in the middle of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F. Have ready an 8-inch square baking pan.
2. Whisk together the flour, brown sugar, and salt in a medium bowl and break up any lumps with your fingers. Cut in the butter with a pastry blender or 2 knives used scissors-fashion, until the mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Knead the dough until it comes together. Transfer the dough to the baking pan and press evenly into the bottom. Bake for 20 minutes, or until light golden brown. Let cool in the pan on a wire rack.
3. Spread the Lemon Curd over the crust. Refrigerate, loosely covered, until ready to serve.
4. Just before serving, lightly sift confectioners' sugar over the Lemon Curd and cut the cookies into 2-inch squares. Store in an airtight container.

Lemon Curd

Lemon Curd is a luscious, bright yellow, tangy custard made with butter instead of milk. It is like a creamy preserve, only eggs are used instead of pectin as thickening agents. It has a shorter shelf life than preserves, but will last several weeks, tightly covered, in the refrigerator – but only if forgotten. Usually it disappears rapidly, often by the spoonful at midnight. This spread is popular in Great Britain, where it's eaten on toasted bread or cake, on scones fresh out of the oven, in tart fillings, and in trifle. This thick lemon sauce is also excellent over fresh fruit, gingerbread, angel food, or pound cake.

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Shortbread with Lemon Curd Bars (continued)

My recipe uses only egg yolks and no whites, which makes it much easier to prepare. (You don't have to use a double boiler, which really slows things down.) Lemon Curd is the most useful of pantry staples, and I often make a double batch. This recipe uses approximately 3 lemons. Makes about 1-1/2 cups.

1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter
3/4 cup sugar
1/2 cup fresh lemon juice
3 tablespoons finely grated lemon zest
Pinch of salt
6 large yolks

1. Melt the butter in a heavy medium saucepan over medium-low heat.
2. Remove the pan from the heat and whisk in the sugar, lemon juice, zest, and salt. Whisk in the yolks until smooth.
3. Cook the mixture, whisking constantly, until it thickens and leaves a path on the back of a wooden spoon when a finger is drawn across it; do not allow the mixture to boil.
4. Immediately pour the Lemon Curd through a strainer into a bowl. Let cool to room temperature, whisking occasionally. Refrigerate, covered, until ready to serve. (Lemon Curd keeps for a month in the refrigerator and for about 3 months in the freezer.)