

AMAZING APRICOT BARS

(from *A Palatable Pastime*)

For shortbread crust:

3/4 cup unsalted butter, softened
1/2 cup granulated sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/4 teaspoon salt
1-3/4 cups all-purpose flour (8-1/2 ounces)

For topping:

1/4 cup old-fashioned oats, toasted
1/4 cup sliced almonds, toasted
1/4 cup sweetened flaked coconut
1/4 cup dried cranberries (craisins)
1/4 cup dried apricots, chopped
1/2 cup unsalted butter (1 stick)
1/4 cup granulated sugar
3 tablespoons honey

For finishing:

1/3 cup apricot jam
3 tablespoons sweetened flaked coconut

Heat oven to 350F.

Butter the inside of a glass 8×8-inch square baking pan. Cream together the butter and sugar (thoroughly mix until sugar dissolves). Stir in the vanilla, salt and flour and mix into a dough. Press dough evenly into the bottom of the buttered baking pan, then chill in the refrigerator while you continue.

Mix the dry ingredients for the topping together in a small bowl. In a small saucepan, melt the butter with sugar and honey over low heat. Stir in the dry fruit topping mixture and bring to a boil; boil for 2 minutes then remove from heat. Take out the baking pan, and spread the top of the dough with the simply fruit apricot spread. Top the spread with the cooked fruit mixture.

Sprinkle the topping with an extra 3 tablespoons of sweetened flaked coconut. Bake in a preheated 350F oven for 20 minutes. Allow to cool completely before slicing into squares.