

Caron

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For my whole life, pumpkin pie has been my favorite dessert, my favorite pie, my favorite sweet. Something about the spiced squash center just makes my taste buds dance with glee.

These Pumpkin Pie Bars have all the great flavors of the center of pumpkin pie, but with a sweet, crisp, slightly salty crust and the nutty goodness of pecans. With a mix of flavors and textures, these bars are a wonderful, forkless way to enjoy the classic in a new way.

You start by making a cookie layer that will serve as the crust for the bars. Reserve a little of that mixture for the crumb layer, while you're at it.

Then you whip up the pumpkin layer — it's really as simple as whisking together a few simple ingredients. Spread that over the cookie layer.

Then you mix up the topping — that reserved cookie mixture is mixed with pecans and spread on top.

Pumpkin Pie Bars

Serves 8-10

Cookie/crumb layer
1½ cups all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon baking powder
1 cup brown sugar
½ cup cold unsalted butter, cut into slices
½ cup chopped pecans

Pumpkin layer
1 15-oz. can pumpkin puree
2 eggs
½ cup sugar
¼ cup flour
1 tablespoon pumpkin pie spice
1 tsp vanilla extract
Confectioners' sugar

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees fahrenheit. Grease a 13-by-9-inch glass baking pan with butter. Set aside.

Sift together the flour, salt,

baking powder and brown sugar for the cookie/crumb layers. Add the butter and cut in using two knives or a pastry blender.

Reserve 1 cup of the cookie/crumb mixture and press the remaining cookie mixture into the prepared pan.

Whisk together the pumpkin, egg, sugar, flour and pumpkin pie spice for the pumpkin layer. Spread evenly over the cookie layer.

In a small mixing bowl, combine the reserved 1 cup of the cookie mixture with pecans, and then sprinkle all over on top.

Slide the bars into the oven and bake for 25-30 minutes until golden.

Let the bars cool and then slice into 1.5-by-1.5-inch bars.

Then bake. And cool. And cut. And love.

Sarah Walker Caron is the senior features editor for the Bangor Daily News and author of "Grains as Mains: Modern Recipes Using

Ancient Grains," available at bookstores everywhere including The Briar Patch and Bull Moose in Bangor. For more delicious recipes, check out Maine Course at mainecourse.bangordailynews.com.

Lab

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room cafe. For a slight rotating fee, consumers can try new tastes such as kettle corn gelato, exotic whoopie pies and other creations from the food hub.

Getting fed while giving feedback is "the secret sauce," said Spillane, whose partner Eric Holstein is the chief operating officer in this novel business.

The tasting room, funded by a \$34,000 Kickstarter campaign, is a new concept for the state, and Fork Food Lab founders say it may be the only one in the country.

"We are really empowering Portland to be part of the process," Spillane said. "Like a beta tester for a game company, we are creating the feedback loop that's like a bug report. It goes directly to the developers and they fix the problems. We are doing that, but for food."

It's not just startups that will have a presence here.

When you walk into the tasting room, Gelato Fiasco's new open kitchen is front and center. Co-owner Bruno Tropeano might be perfecting a batch of goat milk yogurt gelato or working with Fat Pants Bakery on cool flavors long before they land in pints.

The Brunswick company started gelato making classes here last week and are eager to show the public how their dense, creamy



KATHLEEN PIERCE | BDN

The public will be able to try new flavors such as blueberry olive oil from Gelato Fiasco. Fork Food labs opened this week.

desserts are created. As an anchor member, "we can provide some guidance to people who are just starting," Tropeano said.

The move will allow the company to explore, collaborate and stay fluent in emerging trends while offering advice to newcomers. "We started nine years ago and ran into some issues

along the way that people might as well not repeat."

Gelato Fiasco will debut 10 flavors that will change every other day. "Some we might never do again," Tropeano said.

Fork Food Lab's regular hours will be from noon to 8 p.m. Friday, Saturday and Sunday at 72 Parris St., Portland.

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