



TURTLE DESSERT BARS

For the shortbread:

2 sticks (1/2 cup) unsalted butter, chilled and cut into small cubes

1/2 cup brown sugar

2-3 cups flour

For the caramel:

1 cup sugar

6 Tablespoons unsalted butter (if you use salted, omit the salt in the recipe)

1/2 cup heavy cream

1/2 teaspoon kosher salt (if using regular salt, you might want to add a little less)

1 1/2 -2 cups pecans, chopped

For the ganache:

4 ounces dark chocolate (I used 60% cacao), chopped

1/2 cup heavy cream

1 teaspoon vanilla

First, make your shortbread. Put the butter and sugar in a stand mixer with a paddle attachment, and beat until creamed together well. If you don't have a stand mixer, you can use a regular hand mixer. Once the butter and sugar are creamed, add the flour; start with 2 cups and add more if needed. Mix until the mixture looks like fine crumbs, then, with your hands, mix together until a dough forms. Push the dough into a square baking dish (I used a 9 x 9) and bake the shortbread on 350 degrees until it's light golden brown on top, about 25-30 minutes. Once the shortbread is done, take it out of the oven and let it cool completely in the pan.

While the shortbread is in the oven, make the caramel. Put the sugar in a dry, medium-sized saucepan. Turn on the heat to medium-high and let the sugar melt. Once the sugar is melted and has turned a nice dark golden brown, turn off the heat and add the butter and heavy cream and stir until the butter is melted and all ingredients are well combined. Be careful because the mixture will bubble up quite a bit! Stir in the salt and chopped pecans. Let it sit at room temperature and cool while the shortbread finishes baking and cools.

Once the shortbread is completely cool, pour the caramel mixture all over the top of the shortbread and spread evenly. Now, you will make your ganache. Put the chopped chocolate in a bowl, and heat the cream in a small saucepan until it just starts to simmer. Pour the hot cream over the chocolate and stir until the chocolate is melted and the mixture is well combined. Stir in the vanilla. Let the ganache cool for about 15 minutes, then pour over the caramel layer. Cover the bars and put in the refrigerator for at least 2 hours so that they can set. Once they have set, cut and enjoy!!

Recipe courtesy of Karly Vardaman, www.kitchenpsycho.com