



Caramel Walnut and Sesame Bars

MAKES 5 DOZEN SQUARES

Peloponnese is a region of Greece about an hour's drive from Athens. There are coastal villages and rustic villas on cliffs overlooking the Aegean Sea. The cuisine is simple and fresh, with lots of fresh fruits, nuts, and some of the best wine and olive oil in Greece. While visiting the area, I had my share of baklava in various cafes and restaurants and was eager to try something new for a sweet snack. I spent an afternoon on a beach sipping a cold glass of rosé when the bartender offered a buttery walnut treat to nibble with my wine. They were dotted with sesame seeds and had the subtle flavor of orange in every bite. I've done my best to recreate that sweet surprise, and though they probably taste better while basking in the sun with the sea air, they make a particularly delicious treat during the Christmas holidays.

INGREDIENTS

Crust:

2 1/4 cups all purpose flour

2 teaspoons sugar

1 teaspoon salt

2 sticks butter, cold and cut into small pieces

1/4 cup cold water

Walnut Filling:

2 sticks butter

1 cup brown sugar

2 tablespoons granulated sugar

3/4 cup honey

1/4 cup heavy cream

1/2 teaspoon salt

4 cups walnuts, coarsely chopped

Zest of one orange

2 tablespoons white sesame seeds

PROCESS:

Crust:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a food processor, combine the flour, sugar, salt, and butter. Pulse 20 times, until mixture resembles coarse cornmeal. Add the cold water and pulse 10 times until the dough comes together. If dough is too dry, add a bit more water. The dough must be sticky. Take dough from the processor and form into a disc. Wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes. Remove from refrigerator and roll out on a floured board. The dough should be rolled to fit a 9"X13" baking sheet. Carefully transfer the dough to the baking sheet and press to the bottom of the pan. Bake for 20 minutes,



then cool completely. Leave the oven on 350 degrees.

Filling:

To make filling, combine butter, sugars, honey, heavy cream, and salt in a medium saucepan and bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Add the walnuts and continue to stir until it returns to a boil. Add orange zest and cook until the caramel is golden in color, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat and pour into the cooled crust, spreading until it is evenly distributed in the pan. Sprinkle sesame seeds over the top, and bake until the filling is bubbling, about 15 minutes. Let cool in the baking sheet on a wire rack, then cut into 1 1/2" squares.