

Tsubushian Shortbread Bars



Level: Easy

Serves: About 30 bars

Prep Time: 35 minutes

Cooking Time: 45 minutes



1 lb. (or 2 cups) unsalted butter

1 cup white granulated sugar

1 Tbsp. vanilla

$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. salt

$4\frac{1}{2}$ cups all purpose-flour

1 (18 oz.) can Tsubushian (Japanese sweetened red bean paste)

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. ultrafine sugar (Baker's Sugar), for sprinkling on top (optional)

Preheat oven to 375°.

In a stand mixer fitted with a paddle attachment, cream the butter and sugar until combined. Add the vanilla and mix. Add the salt and flour and mix until all are combined and it forms a dough. Separate the dough in half.

Place half of the dough in a 9x13 pan and evenly spread the dough on the bottom of the pan with a large frosting spatula. Next, evenly spread the entire can of tsubushian over the dough. With a rolling pin, flatten the remaining half of dough into a rectangular shape to about $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thickness and place on top of the tsubushian. With a large frosting spatula, spread the top dough until all the tsubushian is covered and the dough looks smooth. Place pan in refrigerator for 15 minutes before baking. Before placing pan in the oven, if desired, evenly sprinkle about $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. of ultrafine sugar on top of the dough for extra sweetness and crunchiness.

Bake for 40 to 45 minutes, until the top of the shortbread is golden brown. Cool completely, separate the shortbread from the sides of the pan with a knife, and cut into bars.

Notes:

- If you have only regular butter and not unsalted butter, omit the $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. of salt when mixing.
- If you don't have a rolling pin, flatten the second half of dough with your clean dry hands into $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick pieces and place on top of the tsubushian. Blend the pieces together with a spatula until there is a smooth finish on the top.
- Do NOT dump the entire second half of dough onto the tsubushian and try to spread it from there. The tsubushian will mix in with the top layer of dough.