

## LEMON BARS

MAKES 12 BARS; SERVES 6 TO 12

*From Vallery Lomas*

### **For the Crust**

Cooking spray  
1¼ cups (150 grams) all-purpose flour  
½ cup confectioners' sugar  
¼ teaspoon fine salt  
1¼ sticks unsalted butter, melted  
1 teaspoon lemon extract (optional)

### **For the Filling**

4 large eggs  
1½ cups granulated sugar  
Finely grated zest of 3 lemons  
(about 1 heaping tablespoon)  
½ cup fresh lemon juice  
(from about 3 large lemons)  
¼ cup (30 grams) all-purpose flour  
½ teaspoon baking powder  
½ teaspoon fine salt  
Confectioners' sugar, for dusting

*“I was born and raised in Baton Rouge—a food paradise where there was no shortage of fresh berries or cakes made by my grandmothers,” Vallery Lomas tells us. “I was starting my final year of law school as the recession loomed, so I started a food blog, Foodie in New York, as a creative outlet.*

*“I worked as an attorney for eight years, and my passion for food and sharing recipes and stories persisted. A casting director for The Great American Baking Show discovered my Instagram account and urged me to audition for the 2017 season. I put my life on hold for several months as I prepared to compete and then went to England to film the show. And then I actually won! But my win never aired because the network canceled the show mid-season due to allegations of sexual harassment against one of the judges. I was most disappointed that my win would not have the effect of inspiring the next generation of curly haired, melanin-rich little girls as I hoped it would. However, I now realize that my presence in the often homogenous world of food media can still inspire people.*

*“Making lemon curd out of lemons has become my mantra. Lemon curd is a perfect metaphor for life: no matter how sour something is, add a little sugar and eggs, have patience, and work, and you will transform those lemons into something rich and delicious!”*

*These lemon bars are bursting with tangy, lemony flavor, but what's unique and brilliant about them is that Vallery figured out a way to make the curd without spending time cooking it on the stovetop.*



Make the crust: Position a rack in the center of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F. Line an 8-inch square baking pan with two rectangles of parchment paper, overlapping them so they are perpendicular to each other and leaving a couple of inches of parchment overhanging the sides. Give the parchment a quick mist of cooking spray.

Whisk together the flour, confectioners' sugar, and salt, in a large bowl. Stir in the melted butter and lemon extract (if using) until combined. Use your hands to press the mixture over the bottom of the prepared pan in an even layer. Bake for 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, make the filling: In a medium bowl using a handheld mixer, beat the eggs on medium speed until light and foamy. Sprinkle in the granulated sugar and beat until the mixture is pale yellow, light, and voluminous, 3 to 4 minutes. Reduce the speed to low and whisk in the lemon zest, lemon juice, flour, baking powder, and salt.

Pour the filling into the hot crust (no need to let it cool). Bake for 25 to 28 minutes, until the filling is lightly browned on top and doesn't appear wet or jiggle when you gently shake the pan. Set the pan on a wire rack and let cool to room temperature, then refrigerate for at least 1 hour or freeze for 30 minutes before serving.

Using the overhanging parchment, gently lift the lemon bars out of the pan and transfer to a cutting board. Cut into 12 squares (they are quite rich). Dust with confectioners' sugar just before serving. These are best devoured the day they're made.