

Sports Bars *Burst* with Energy

Everywhere you look sports bars abound. There are dozens of brands offering just as many flavors. But why have sports bars become so popular? The hectic pace of everyday life means many people find it hard to fit in meals, yet they still need energy. Sports bars fill that need. They also help people who are looking for a snack to boost them during workouts or other physical activities. Sports bars should not become your daily meal replacement, but they're great for adding energy before a workout or when you're stuck in the office during lunchtime. And they beat other high fat or empty calorie food choices.

The following sports bar recipe comes from the Popcorn Board (www.popcorn.org). It is loaded with nutrient rich ingredients (almonds, apricots, cranberries and soy nuts) that add needed vitamins and minerals to your diet. Popcorn is a whole grain that provides carbohydrates and fiber to the diet and is naturally low in fat and calories. Consuming at least 3 or more ounce equivalents of whole grains per day can reduce the risk of several chronic diseases and may help with weight maintenance. That's good news for your waistline. For more great tasting recipes, visit www.popcorn.org.

Power Packed Popcorn Sport Bars

Fiber and protein from nutritious ingredients in a handy crispy bar -- and without corn syrup!

Makes: 12 (3x2-inch) bars

Preparation time: 20 minutes

Baking time: 30 minutes

2 quarts popped popcorn
 1/2 cup sliced almonds
 1/2 cup shredded coconut
 1/2 cup chopped dried apricots
 1/2 cup sweetened dried cranberries
 1/2 cup roasted soy nuts (or shelled sunflower seeds)
 3 tablespoons butter or margarine
 2/3 cup honey
 1/4 cup brown sugar (light or dark)
 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
 1/2 teaspoon salt



- Preheat oven to 300 degrees F. Line a 13x9-inch pan with foil and spray lightly with cooking spray; set aside.
- Place popcorn, almonds, coconut, apricots, cranberries and soy nuts in a large bowl; set aside.
- In a small saucepan, heat butter, honey, brown sugar, vanilla and salt over medium heat. Stir to blend and bring to a boil. Boil 2 minutes, stirring constantly; pour over popcorn mixture. Stir to blend all ingredients and pour into foil-lined pan. With damp hands, press mixture lightly and evenly into pan. Bake 30 minutes or until lightly browned. Cool in pan at least 3 hours before cutting into rectangles to serve. Wrap individually in plastic wrap and store in an airtight container up to 2 weeks.

