

# Salt and Serenity

## Pretzel Crusted Turtle Bars

These addictive triple layered sweet and salty bars are based on an old Gourmet Magazine recipe (December 1991). I added a crushed pretzel crust to kick it up a notch!

### **Pretzel Crust Layer**

2 heaping cups of small pretzel twists  
½ cup all-purpose flour  
½ cup packed light or dark brown sugar  
¼ teaspoon baking soda  
½ cup unsalted butter, melted

### **Chocolate Middle Layer**

5 tablespoons unsalted butter  
¼ cup unsweetened cocoa powder  
½ cup firmly packed light brown sugar  
1 large egg, beaten lightly  
¼ cup all-purpose flour  
⅛ teaspoon salt  
½ teaspoon vanilla

### **Pecan Caramel Top Layer**

¾ stick (6 tablespoons) unsalted butter  
1 ½ cups firmly packed light brown sugar  
4 tablespoons golden corn syrup  
⅓ cup 35% cream  
½ teaspoon coarse sea salt  
3 cups pecans, toasted lightly, and coarsely chopped

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line an 8 x 11 inch Pyrex pan with parchment paper. (A 9 x 13 inch pan would also work just fine)
2. **Prepare pretzel layer:** Place pretzels into a zip-loc bag. Using your hands, crush pretzels quite finely. There can be a few big chunks of pretzels still in the mix. The back of a metal measuring cup works quite well to assist with the crushing. You will end up with 1 cup of crushed pretzels.

3. In a medium bowl, mix together crushed pretzels, flour, brown sugar, baking soda and melted butter. Pat the mixture evenly into the bottom of the prepared pan. Bake in 350° oven for 10 minutes. Set aside and allow to cool slightly. Do not turn oven off.
4. **Prepare chocolate middle layer:** In a heavy saucepan melt the butter with the cocoa, stirring until the mixture is smooth. Remove the pan from the heat, beat in the brown sugar and the egg, and stir in the flour, the salt, and the vanilla. Spread the mixture over the pretzel layer in the baking pan. Bake it in the middle of a preheated 350°F. oven for 12-14 minutes, or until it is just firm to the touch and pulls away slightly from the sides, and let it cool in the pan on a rack.
5. **Prepare Pecan Caramel top layer:** Clip a candy thermometer to the side of a heavy saucepan; making sure that the tip does not touch the bottom of the pan. Melt the butter, add the brown sugar and the corn syrup, and bring the mixture to a boil over moderate heat, stirring with a wooden spoon. Boil the mixture, stirring occasionally, until it reaches the hard-ball stage (260°F. on a candy thermometer), remove the pan from the heat, and add the cream, sea salt and pecans carefully, stirring gently.
6. Place pan back on the heat and bring the mixture to a boil and continue boiling it until it reaches the soft-ball stage (240°F. on a candy thermometer). Remove the pan from the heat and let the caramel mixture cool for 1 minute.
7. Pour the topping over the base, spreading it evenly with the wooden spoon, let it cool, and chill the confection, covered with foil, for 2 hours, or until it is firm. Run a thin knife around the edges of the pan, turn the confection out onto a cutting board, and cut it into bars. The bars keep, separated by sheets of wax paper, in an airtight container, chilled, for 1 week.