

Caramel M&M Bars

makes 24 bars

1 1/2 cups firmly packed brown sugar
1 1/2 cups butter, softened
1 cup quick-cooking rolled oats
1 cup Rice Crispy cereal
2 cups all-purpose flour
1 tsp. baking soda
1/2 tsp. salt
35 vanilla caramels, unwrapped
1/3 cup milk
1 (14 oz) package of M&M's (I used the Christmas ones), divided

~Heat oven to 350°. Spray 13x9 inch pan with nonstick spray. In large bowl, combine brown sugar & butter; beat until smooth. Stir in oats & cereal. Add flour, baking soda & salt; mix until well blended. ****Reserve 3 cups oat mixture for topping.**** Press remaining mixture in bottom of sprayed pan. Bake at 350° for 10 minutes.

~Meanwhile, in a small saucepan, combine caramels & milk. Heat over low heat until caramels are melted & mixture is smooth, stirring constantly.

~Remove pan from oven. Sprinkle 1 cup of the M&M's evenly over base. Drizzle with caramel mixture, being careful not to let caramel touch the sides of the pan. (Sounds like such a little thing, but trust me, you will have a heck of a time getting the bars out of the pan if they are caramel-glued to the pan! I'm speaking from first hand experience here.) Drop reserved oat mixture by heaping teaspoonfuls over caramel mixture. Sprinkle with remaining chocolate pieces.

~Return to oven; bake an additional 20-25 minutes or until centre is set & top is golden brown. Cool 1 hour or until completely cooled. Cut into bars. Store in an air tight container in the refrigerator.