

## A fun twist to the lemon bar tradition



Lemon-Lime Bars on Shortbread Crust

Photo Susie Iventosch

### By Susie Iventosch

These lemon-lime bars are a fun twist on traditional lemon bars with the combination of freshly-squeezed lime and lemon juice. We actually like them better than straight lemon bars, which are hard to beat. We love the tangy sweet filling and crispy shortbread crust. They are the perfect summer dessert, so light and delicious. The combination of

citrus flavors is mouthwatering and will have you and your guests coming back for more. If you're anything like us, you won't be able to leave them alone till they're all gone!

These bars store well in the refrigerator for several days, so you can keep coming back for more, or at least make them ahead of time for your next party.

### Lemon-Lime Bars

Prep Time: 20 Minutes | Bake Time: 1 hour total | Makes about 24 two-inch bars

#### INGREDIENTS

##### Crust:

1 cup unsalted butter (8 oz. or 2 sticks), softened to room temperature  
1/2 cup granulated sugar  
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract  
1/4 teaspoon salt

##### 2 cups all-purpose flour

##### Lemon-Lime filling:

6 large eggs  
2 cups granulated sugar  
1/3 cup all-purpose flour  
1/2 cup fresh squeezed lemon juice  
1/2 cup fresh squeezed lime juice

Garnishes: 1/4 cup powdered sugar, candied lemon, and lime slices, or thin slices of lemon and lime peel.

#### DIRECTIONS

##### Crust:

Preheat oven to 350 F. Grease or spray a 9x13 inch baking dish. (We prefer to simply spray or grease the baking dish because when we've used parchment paper instead, we had the unfortunate result of the filling undermining the crust and we ended up with lemon-lime upside-down bars!)

In a mixing bowl, cream together butter, sugar, and vanilla. Stir in flour and salt and mix until well integrated.

Press the crust mixture into the bottom of the prepared baking dish. The crust will be 1/4 to 1/3-inch thick.

Bake at 350 F for 20-25 minutes. You want the crust to be a nice golden brown, but not too dark since it will be baking again with the filling.

Remove from oven and reduce oven temperature to 300 F.

##### Lemon-Lime Filling:

Meanwhile, while the crust is baking, whisk eggs until beaten. In a separate bowl, mix together sugar and flour and then whisk into eggs. Finally, whisk in lemon and lime juice until well blended.

Pour filling mixture over the warm crust and bake for 40-45 minutes, or until lemon-lime custard is set.

Remove from oven and cool completely. Refrigerate until firm and then cut into 2-inch squares. Dust everything with powdered sugar and serve with a dollop of whipped cream or plain.

Garnish with lemon and lime peel shavings, or candied lemon and lime slices.

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## The illusion of 'test optional' colleges

### By Elizabeth LaScala, Ph.D.

With the COVID-19 pandemic and the onset of nearly universal distance learning for all high school students, both parents and students have been relieved to hear that many college admission procedures are going "test optional" this year. While "test optional" does mean that standardized tests like the ACT and the SAT are not required, these tests remain optional which means the student can elect to submit them as part of their application.

Despite going "test optional" nearly all test optional colleges will carefully consider standardized test scores when they are made available by applicants. Test optional does not mean test blind. In general, most students with profiles strong enough to think they have some chance of admission to more competitive test optional colleges

should try to prep for and attain strong test scores to enhance their applications. Also, since many test optional colleges may nevertheless require standardized test scores for some applicants, it is best to check with each college you plan to send an application, in order to know what is expected. Examples of reasons why some applicants may be required to submit scores to some colleges include those seeking to be admitted to certain majors (e.g., engineering, computer science), recruitable athletes, students applying to the school's honors college, and those seeking need-based or merit awards, among others.

In past years, admissions staff in test optional colleges were able to do their jobs and evaluate applicants who do not send scores by focusing on the high school transcript to give insight into the applicant's academic preparedness. However, with the onset of the coronavirus came distance

learning, and with distance learning came some pretty rampant grade inflation. Many teachers could not teach all relevant material remotely and often teachers had no truly effective way to test their students' knowledge. Lacking valid assessments, some teachers dropped final exams, some may have discouraged AP testing and sometimes, maybe even often, gave students better grades than they might have otherwise, so as not to punish students for conditions that were beyond their control.

Many students and parents have breathed a sigh of relief that many colleges are going test optional for applications submitted this fall. While this stance is understandable given that so many students were unable to take standardized tests in the spring and summer due to site closings and other obstacles, this decision has put admissions staff in a difficult spot. Due to the reasons mentioned

above, admissions staff may find it much more difficult to interpret and rely upon high school grades as one of the few, often the only, objective measure of student achievement. Rigor of coursework (honors, AP classes), extracurricular involvement, honors and awards, letters of recommendation and the quality of college essays will be weighted more heavily than before. If one or more of these areas are nonexistent or mediocre, it will be harder for a student to gain admission. This means that admissions staff will be thankful when an applicant sends standardized test scores because it will help them evaluate the student's application and make a stronger case for admission. If you are a rising high school senior, pay attention to these well intended words of advice and invest some of your available resources in good test preparation this summer.



Elizabeth LaScala, PhD personally guides each student through each step of selecting and applying to well-matched schools for undergraduate and graduate school study. Over the past two decades, Elizabeth has placed hundreds of students in some of the most prestigious colleges and universities in the U.S. The number of clients taken is limited to ensure each applicant has personalized attention. Contact Elizabeth early in the process to make a difference in your outcomes. Write [elizabeth@doingcollege.com](mailto:elizabeth@doingcollege.com); Visit [www.doingcollege.com](http://www.doingcollege.com); or Call: 925.385.0562.

## The beat goes on! How to get back on track with your post-pandemic financial planning

### By Lynn Ballou CFP®

It's perhaps premature and too optimistic to say we are in a true post-pandemic phase now, however, it appears that there is light at the end of the dark tunnel. Which means it is absolutely time to shake out the dust and brush off the cobwebs to clearly review and perhaps even reset our financial goals. Some of us find that our attitudes about life have changed. Others have had circumstances change unexpectedly. However you arrived where you find yourselves today, here are five areas for your consideration as you emerge from the darkness to the light of regaining control over your daily life.

**1) Where does your money go?** Whether you use something formal such as an expense tracking program or sheer intuition, take a look at where your money went the past 15 months. If you find that you made shifts that involved living on less, is that sustainable? Will spending less going forward allow you to be financially independent sooner by investing more now and keeping your living costs lower? Or perhaps staying lean on your base spending could allow you to deploy discretionary spending on what you previously

considered indulgences. This is your opportunity to make lasting purposeful change in your planning.

**2) Are you on your right professional path?** Resetting might involve a career change. There's a massive labor shift underway as dormant parts of the economy restart. More employers are open to having team members work from home. And we've seen the importance that technology plays in our lives as it continues to evolve. If you are dissatisfied with your current path, consider a new one and determine what skills you need that would enable you to shift. Investing in yourself could be the most rewarding investment you could possibly make. You have a rare opportunity to hit the reset button. Research your areas of interest, set up informational interviews to learn what's required to succeed, review the costs/rewards timeline. If feasible, set your professional course in a new direction.

**3) Insurance: It really does matter!** I'm just as fabulous at procrastinating as everyone else and like so many readers, I do struggle with annually reviewing my property, casualty and umbrella insurance policies and keeping up with what I have and why. What keeps me sane and confident are my

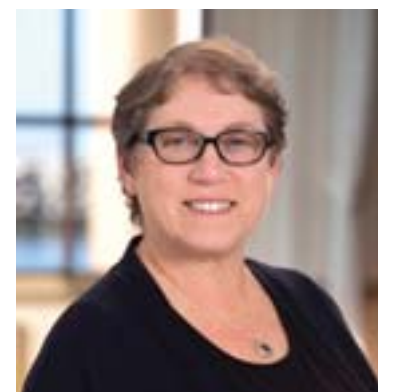
trusted insurance agents. Every year we set up a live review. Not only are we examining deductibles and possible gaps, but we are also discussing changes and trends in insurance. It helps me stay prepared and reminds me that insurance is a partnership. And I always ask my agents the same questions each year: What would you do differently if you were me? What coverages should I have that I don't? I suggest you expand the same review format and ideas to your other insurance coverages such as disability, life, health and long-term care insurance. Some reviews you have set through work where an annual review format is in place. The rest require you to take the initiative to review but better before a claims event than after. This is where the adage about the barn door and the horse and the road comes into play!

**4) Congress: What are they up to now and what should you do?** Financial planning is challenging when the backdrop is a never ending merry-go-round of changing income and estate tax laws. Because no matter how carefully you plan, the government can insert a trip wire into the laws that might impact our plans at any time. The latest excitement revolves around possible in-

creases to income and capital gain taxes and more surprising, increasing estate taxes by undoing long-standing rules of how we can pass our assets to future generations. I will focus future columns on specifics as they become clear. Your job today? Stay informed – but don't panic! – and reach out to your trusted advisors now so you have plans in place to make revisions if appropriate as changes occur.

**5) Disaster proof your plan:** It seems obvious that one of the most important aspects of planning should involve testing our plans for the unexpected. We have just experienced the most dramatic real life global enactment of surviving the unexpected in generations. Now is a great time to look back at your plan before the pandemic, and then overlay your former situation with the reality of where you are financially today. Based on your findings, you and your financial advisor may note areas that need work. This might include rebuilding emergency reserves, changing your living situation, reconstructing your budget for post pandemic life, rebalancing your investment portfolio, and many other possibilities. Make a timeline and then plan to implement those changes thoughtfully. The final take away?

Planning should always be done with a critical "what can go wrong and if it does will I still be okay" point of view. We just survived a real life lab on crisis survival. Let's not waste this opportunity to learn, review our finances, revise our planning appropriately, and move forward with care. Please reach out if I can be of help!



Lynn Ballou CFP® is a Senior Vice President and Partner with EP Wealth Advisors. Information used in the writing of this column is believed to be factual and up-to-date, but we do not guarantee its accuracy and it should not be regarded as a complete analysis of the subject(s) discussed. All information is derived from sources deemed to be reliable. All expressions of opinion reflect the judgment of the author as of the date of publication and are subject to change.