Dried Cherry Granola Bars

½ cup chopped pecans
½ cup sliced almonds
½ cup chopped walnuts
3/4 cup coarsely chopped dried cherries
2 cups old fashioned oats
½ cup roasted unsalted sunflower seeds
2 Tablespoons ground flaxseed
¼ cup canola oil
½ cup honey
¼ cup light brown sugar
¼ cup pure maple syrup
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
½ teaspoon cinnamon
¼ teaspoon cardamom
Pinch of nutmeg
1 teaspoon kosher salt

Preheat oven to 375° F. Spread nuts on a cookie sheet and toast them in the oven for 6–8 minutes or until they just begin to brown.

Place cherries in small bowl; add warm water to barely cover and soak for a few minutes. Mix oats, sunflower seeds, flaxseed and nuts in large bowl. Drain cherries and stir them in.

In a small saucepan, mix the remaining ingredients and cook over medium-high heat. Stir to avoid burning. Once the syrup comes to a light boil, cook for another 3–5 minutes until it begins to thicken. Add to the large bowl and mix until the syrup evenly coats everything.

Pour the warm granola mixture into an 8” x 8” baking dish generously greased with butter. Use a spatula to pat down until evenly compacted. Place parchment paper on top; using your fingertips, press firmly all over (this will help the bars hold together).

Bake for 20 minutes, rotating the dish after 10 minutes for more even baking. Let cool to room temperature. Refrigerating for a bit will make cutting easier. Cut into squares or rectangles.

Recipe developed by Corporate Chef Kurt Kwiatkowski and featured in Residential Dining Services.