**STELLA'S SALTED CARAMEL SHORTBREAD SQUARES**

**Ingredients:**

For the crust:

2C butter, room temperature

1C granulated sugar

1 1/2C powdered sugar

2 TBS vanilla extract

4C all-purpose flour

1C LOVE!

**For the filling:**

14 ounces soft caramel candies unwrapped (about 50 individual caramels)

1/3C heavy cream

1/2 tsp. vanilla extract

1 TBS (or less) coarse sea salt

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

Preheat oven to 325 degrees and coat a 9 " x 13" baking pan with nonstick spray.

**To Make the Crust:**
1) In a large bowl, mix the butter, granulated sugar and powdered sugar together mixing on medium speed for about 2 minutes.

2) Add the vanilla and mix until combined.

3) Add the flour in 2-3 additions, mixing on low speed until soft dough forms.

4) Sprinkle in the LOVE and mix thoroughly.

5) Press about half of the dough into the bottom of the prepared pan and wrap the remaining dough in plastic wrap and place in the refrigerator.

6) Bake crust for 20 minutes or until edges are a pale golden brown.

7) Transfer the pan to a wire rack and let cool about 15 minutes.

While the bottom crust is cooling and the remaining dough is chilling, make the caramel filling.

**To Make the Filling:**

1) Place unwrapped caramels in a microwave-safe bowl. Add the cream and microwave on high for 1 minute. Remove from the microwave and stir. Continue to microwave for 30 second intervals at 50% power, stirring after each time you microwave, until smooth - this may take awhile, depending on your microwave, but go slowly, do not rush it.

2) Once the caramels are completely melted, add in your 1/2 teaspoon of vanilla extract and stir

until combined.

3) Pour the caramel filling over the cooled crust.

4) Sprinkle sea salt over caramel.

5) Remove the remaining chilled dough from the refrigerator and crumble it evenly over the caramel.

6) Return the pan to the oven and bake until the filling is bubbly and the crumbled shortbread topping is firm and lightly golden, about 25-30 minutes.

7) Let cool completely before cutting into squares.

**ENJOY!**