



FROM
SWEET
TO B

**9 Vegan
Cookies, Bars & Bites
for the Holidays**

» BENBELLA «
vegan

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Holiday Sandies Cookies

[MAKES 24 TO 26 COOKIES] My grandma made a butter-based version of these cookies every holiday, and now my mom has followed suit. As a child, I used to sneak these cookies right off of the dessert tray, even before dinner was served! This jazzy, nondairy version is every bit as good as Grandma's . . . and no one will *ever* suspect that it's vegan!

COOKIES

1 cup homemade oat flour (see note)
 ½ cup ground walnuts (see note)
 2 tablespoons vegan confectioners' sugar
 6 tablespoons cold vegan margarine
 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
 2 to 2½ teaspoons cold nondairy milk

TOPPING

½ cup vegan confectioners' sugar

CHEF'S NOT

To make oat flour, place 1½ cups rolled oats in a blender and process into a coarse flour. Proceed with recipe as directed.

To grind walnuts, place ¾ cup chopped walnuts in a blender and process into coarse crumbs. Proceed with recipe as directed.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Line a large baking sheet with unbleached parchment paper.

Put the oat flour, walnuts, and 2 tablespoons confectioners' sugar in a medium bowl and stir with a dry whisk to combine. Add the vegan margarine and vanilla. Mix to combine using a dough blender or large fork. Add the nondairy milk, 1 teaspoon at a time, until the mixture becomes the consistency of soft dough.

Form the dough into a log. Cover the log loosely in parchment paper, and refrigerate for 20 to 30 minutes, or until almost firm to the touch. Cut a ¼-inch slice from the dough log. Put the slice on the lined baking sheet and form it into a crescent shape. Repeat with the remaining dough, until you have formed 24 to 26 cookies. Bake for 7 minutes, then turn the heat down to 300 degrees F. Bake 10 to 12 minutes more, or until the cookies are slightly golden around the edges. Put the baking sheet on a wire rack and cool for 3 to 4 minutes.

Pour ½ cup confectioners' sugar into a small bowl. Roll each cookie in the confectioners' sugar. Arrange the cookies on a pretty serving tray. Stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator, the cookies will keep for 4 days.

GERMAN CHOCOLATE NO-BAKE COOKIES

MAKES 10–12 COOKIES



These cookies are inspired by my love for German chocolate cake, German chocolate cookies, or German chocolate anything! Toasting the pecans and the coconut really brings out their flavor.

½ cup pecans

¾ cup unsweetened shredded coconut

1 cup Medjool dates, pitted

1 tablespoon unsweetened cocoa

1. Toast the pecans and shredded coconut in a 350°F oven for 5 minutes.
2. Add the toasted mixture to the bowl of a food processor with the remaining ingredients and process until the mixture starts to form a ball.
3. Using a small ice cream scoop or tablespoon, shape the dough into cookies and place on a baking sheet.
4. Refrigerate for 1 hour until set. Store in an airtight container for up to 7 days.

COCONUT PILLOWS

MAKES 13–15 COOKIES



RECIPE BY DREENA BURTON

These yummy, nibbly cookies are made nutritious with oat flour, nut butter, and sweetened with maple syrup, orange juice, and a touch of coconut sugar.

1¼ cups oat flour (use certified gluten-free for that option)

½ cup unsweetened shredded coconut

2 tablespoons coconut sugar (can substitute another unrefined sugar)

1 teaspoon baking powder

¼ teaspoon baking soda

⅛ teaspoon sea salt

Few pinches of ground cinnamon (optional)

¼ cup nut butter (unsalted; I prefer raw almond butter or cashew, see Tips)

¼ cup maple syrup

2 tablespoons fresh orange juice

½–1 teaspoon orange zest (optional, zest orange before juicing)

1½ teaspoons vanilla extract

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. In a bowl, combine the oat flour, coconut, coconut sugar, baking powder, baking soda, salt, and cinnamon.
3. In a small bowl, first combine the nut butter with the maple syrup, whisking to smooth out.
4. Add in the orange juice, zest, and vanilla and stir through.
5. Add wet mixture to dry and stir until just combined (do not overmix).
6. Place batter in fridge to chill for about 20–30 minutes.
7. After chilling, use a small cookie scoop to place rounds of the dough (about a tablespoon or rounded tablespoon in size) on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. The batter will be sticky, so rinse the scoop a few times through if you like.
8. Bake cookies for 10 minutes, then remove and let cool on the sheet for 1–2 minutes. Transfer to a cookie sheet.



TIPS

Depending on the nut butter used, the batter can be thicker or looser. Start with $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups oat flour and if the batter is a little loose after stirring, sprinkle in an extra tablespoon of flour. Note that the batter will also firm up with chilling.

Other nut butters can be substituted, though almond and cashew are my favorites. If using a seed butter, the batter will need extra sweetness, so adjust with a few teaspoons of maple syrup to taste and a touch more cinnamon.

Fig Deltons

MAKES 12 BARS

See photo on pages 264–265.

I love Fig Newtons, and even though you can get them fat-free, they are still high in sugar. Here is my low-fat and sugar-free version.

Filling

1 pound dried figs (about 3 cups), stemmed and chopped

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup Best Date Syrup Ever (page 83)

Zest of 1 orange

Crust and Topping

1 cup whole-wheat pastry flour

1 cup barley flour

$\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon baking powder

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon sea salt

1 cup Best Date Syrup Ever (page 83)

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup applesauce

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Line an 8 × 8 inch square baking pan with parchment paper and set aside.

To make the filling, purée the figs with the date syrup and orange zest in a food processor until smooth and creamy. Add water as needed to make a smooth consistency. Set aside.

To make the batter for the crust and topping, combine the flours, baking powder, cinnamon, and salt in a bowl and mix well. Add the date syrup, applesauce, and vanilla extract to another bowl and mix. Add the applesauce mixture to the bowl with the flour mixture and gently fold the ingredients together.

To assemble the bars:

Spread half of the batter in the prepared pan. Spread the fig filling over it and spread the remaining batter on top of the filling. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, until a toothpick inserted in the center of the pan comes out clean. Let cool before cutting into squares.



Fig Deltons



The Best Date Syrup Ever

MAKES 3 CUPS

Dates are nature's candy and a great natural sweetener. Medjool dates are sweeter than other dates, and stevia gives this recipe extra sweetening power, so I can use less of this calorie-dense treat. Use this date syrup as a sweetener in place of your regular sugar, or add a little vanilla extract to it and use it as a topping for ice cream (pages 266–267).

2 cups pitted Medjool dates

½ teaspoon stevia powder

1½ to 2 cups water

Place all ingredients in a blender and purée until smooth and creamy. Add water as needed to get the mixture to blend. Store refrigerated for up to one week.

Maple Spice Sandwich Cream Cookies



INGREDIENTS

Spiced Cream

- 1 cup cashews, soaked
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- Pinch sea salt
- Pinch ground clove
- Pinch ground nutmeg
- Pinch ground cardamom*

Wet

- ¼ cup + 2 tablespoons maple syrup
- ¼ cup + 1 tablespoon coconut oil
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 2 tablespoons hot water

Dry

- 1½ cups almond flour
- ¾ cup brown rice flour
- 3 tablespoons Sukanat
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ¾ teaspoon sea salt

Fold-ins

- ½ cup rolled oats
- ½ cup raw pecans, toasted and chopped

10+ SERVINGS

Oatmeal cookies times two with spiced cream filling. Now, that's a smart cookie.

STEPS

1. Preheat oven to 325°F and line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Blend together all Spiced Cream ingredients until smooth and pop in the fridge to chill for 2 – 4 hours.
3. In a medium-sized bowl, whisk or blend together all wet ingredients and set aside.
4. In a large bowl, sift together dry ingredients. Fold wet ingredients into dry, and then add fold-ins.
5. Spoon dough into 2" rounds onto baking sheet. Press them down a touch with your hand or a silicone spatula. (They don't collapse when baking, so the height they go in is the height they come out.)
6. Bake 10 – 12 minutes. Remove from oven and cool on baking sheet. Transfer to fridge to chill.
7. Remove Spiced Cream from fridge and spread some on one cooled cookie. Top with another. Repeat until all cookies are made into magical sandwiches.

psst! You can skip the Spiced Cream and just make oatmeal cookies here. Try adding the spice from the cream into the batter first or adding ¼ cup raisins if you do.



CHOCO-LATTE COOKIES

Yield: 18 cookies

Prep time: 15 minutes

½ c. almond flour

½ c. coconut flour

⅓ c. cacao powder

⅓ c. coconut crystals

1½ tsp. espresso powder

**½ tsp. vanilla bean powder
or vanilla extract**

Pinch of sea salt

10 pitted dates

3 tbsp. almond milk

3 tbsp. coconut nectar

2 tbsp. almond butter

1½ tsp. coffee extract

⅓ c. cacao nibs

**Coconut palm sugar or raw
cane sugar, for garnish**

One of the joys of my childhood was spending the day with my grandfather, who often let us help him recycle soda cans. We'd load up the back of his Chevy pickup with as many bags of cans as we could safely fit, then drive the distance from Revere to the recycling center in Boston. Once we arrived at the recycling center, my sisters and I would step aside while our strong grandpa tossed the big black bags over his shoulder, just like Santa Claus—and with his jolly smile, rosy cheeks, and sacks of treasure, he wasn't far off from the real thing! Then, can by can, we'd carefully unload our bounty onto a conveyer belt. When our work was done we'd be rewarded with coins and treated to a taco lunch at our favorite place to eat—Taco Bell. After lunch he'd let us pick out a sweet; he always chose something chocolate. And so it was that I was thinking about my grandfather when I developed these rich, chocolaty cookies. I think they'd be right up his alley!

Line a platter with parchment paper.

In a large mixing bowl or the bowl of an electric mixer, combine the almond flour, coconut flour, cacao powder, coconut crystals, espresso powder, vanilla bean powder, and sea salt. Gently mix with the whisk attachment of the mixer until well incorporated, approximately 30 seconds.

Add the dates, almond milk, coconut nectar, almond butter, and coffee extract to the bowl and mix again for 30 seconds or until well incorporated. Add the cacao nibs and mix until thoroughly combined.

Using an ice-cream scoop, scoop balls of dough onto the parchment paper. Lightly flatten with the palm of your hand. Turn the cookies over and, using the back of a fork, make impressions in two directions (one horizontal, one vertical—they'll cross in the middle) on top of the cookie. Lightly sprinkle sugar on top for garnish. Store in a cool, dry place for up to 3 days.

♥ TIPS & TRICKS ♥

For a firmer cookie, refrigerate before serving. For a crunchier cookie, dehydrate them in a 108°F oven for 8 hours.



♥ SAVOR THIS ♥

Many people avoid chocolate because they think it's fattening, addictive, and nutritionally void. The truth is, pure cacao from the cacao bean is highly nutritious and has a number of health benefits. Not only is it full of fiber, magnesium, and iron, but it's also rich in antioxidants. Pure cacao (cocoa) may also have the ability to boost endorphins, which makes us feel happy in the same way that other endorphin-boosting activities (like exercising or laughing) do. Cacao does contain caffeine, something to consider when deciding whether or not it's for you. But also listen to your body: it will tell you whether cacao is the right choice (and for most of us, it is!).



♥ MAKE IT YOUR OWN ♥



LEMON-KISSED BLONDIE BITES

Occasionally I want a sweet treat that isn't chocolate. Rare, but true. These little bites fit the bill perfectly—sweet, with a kiss of zesty lemon!

Makes 14–16 balls

1 cup pitted dates
¾ cup rolled oats
½ cup raw cashews
1½ teaspoons lemon zest
Seeds scraped from
1 vanilla bean (see note)
or ¼–½ teaspoon pure
vanilla extract or
½ teaspoon vanilla
bean powder
Couple pinches sea salt
1½ teaspoons freshly
squeezed lemon juice
2 tablespoons
unsweetened shredded
coconut

Optional Coating:

3–4 teaspoons shredded
coconut
3–4 teaspoons rolled
oats
½ teaspoon lemon zest

In a food processor, add the dates, oats, cashews, lemon zest, vanilla bean seeds, sea salt, and lemon juice and process. At first it will appear as if nothing is happening and the mixture is just whirring around crumbs, but it will soon start to become sticky.

When the mixture starts to become a little sticky, add the shredded coconut and process again. Continue to process until the dough forms a ball on the blade. Stop, and then remove the dough.

Take 1–1½ tablespoon scoops of the dough and roll in your hand. Repeat until you have used all of the dough.

To make the coating:

In a small bowl, combine the shredded coconut, rolled oats, and lemon zest. Toss or roll the balls in the coating if desired, and refrigerate.

Vanilla Note: To remove the vanilla seeds from the bean, slice down the outer side of the bean to open up lengthwise. Press open the sides, and using a blunt knife, scrape out the tiny seeds from both sides. The pod can be discarded or kept to infuse flavor in other dishes.

Kitchen Tip: The texture of these bites is somewhat soft, but firms with chilling. For a firmer texture, add another 2 tablespoons of rolled oats.



Lemon-Kissed Blondie Bites

NO-BAKE PEANUT BUTTER BARS

PREPARATION TIME: 15 minutes | **CHILLING TIME:** 1 hour

MAKES 9 SERVINGS   

These bars are rich, creamy, sweet, and satisfying—everything a dessert should be!

1 cup low-fat graham crackers, crushed
¼ cup crushed walnuts
½ cup reduced-fat, unsweetened coconut
⅓ cup low-fat peanut butter
¼ cup nondairy milk
1 cup nondairy chocolate chips
5 tablespoons rice or almond milk

- 1 | Crush graham crackers in food processor. In separate bowl, add walnuts, coconut, and peanut butter. Stir in crushed graham crackers.
- 2 | Slowly add milk and mix. If mixture does not hold together, continue adding additional milk until all ingredients stick together. However, don't make it too soft, and, if necessary, use your hands.
- 3 | Spread mixture evenly into a 9 × 9 nonstick baking dish.
- 4 | In a saucepan, melt chocolate chips together with rice or almond milk over medium heat. Stir until smooth.
- 5 | Spread chocolate mixture on top of peanut butter mixture. Refrigerate for 1 hour or until hardened. Cut into squares and enjoy!

TIP

These make a great holiday treat.



PROTEIN IN PEANUTS

If you are looking to add more protein to your diet, look no further than in your kitchen pantry, where you may have a jar of peanuts stored and readily available to eat. In *The China Study*, peanuts are described as legumes that are rich in protein.*

This handy, and not to mention tasty, food choice is a convenient way to add some nutrition to your daily meals. Incorporate them in a variety of food dishes or eat them as they are, as a quick and healthy snack.

**The China Study*, pg. 34

DATE BARS

This is probably the most requested cookie/bar in my house—sweet dates cooked to perfection, sandwiched between a nutty oatmeal crumble. They are wholesome and rich in flavor. I like to prepare these during the holidays.

2 cups instant oatmeal
4 tablespoons agave nectar,
divided
½ cup unsweetened
applesauce
9 tablespoons water, divided
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
½ teaspoon baking soda
¼ teaspoon sea salt
1 pound pitted Medjool dates,
chopped
3 tablespoons chopped
walnuts
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 teaspoon almond extract

Yields: 12 bars

Prep Time: 10 minutes **Cook Time:** 30 minutes

1. Preheat oven to 400°F. Line a 9 × 9 inch pan with parchment paper and set aside.
2. In a large bowl, mix the oatmeal, 3 tablespoons of the agave, applesauce, 4 tablespoons of the water, cinnamon, baking soda, and salt. This should have a thick consistency.
3. Firmly press half the oatmeal mixture into the prepared pan. Reserve the remaining oatmeal crumble for the top.
4. In a saucepan over low heat, combine the dates, walnuts, remaining 1 tablespoon agave, remaining 5 tablespoons water, lemon juice, and almond extract, stirring constantly until thickened, about 10 minutes.
5. Spread the thickened date mixture evenly over the oatmeal crumble mixture using a spatula. Top with the remaining oat mixture and press lightly.
6. Bake until golden brown, 25–30 minutes.
7. Cool thoroughly and cut into 12 bars.

KIM'S HINTS:

- Silicone pans will not stick and you won't need to use parchment paper. Amazon and kitchen supply stores sell silicone baking mats, bread pans, muffin molds, and casserole pans that are very inexpensive. I highly recommend them if you bake often.
- Before cutting into bars, I like to drizzle a light coating of powdered sugar and water over the top for a garnish. This is not necessary and adds extra sugar, so special occasions only!





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