Healthier Holidays

*Ami would like to note that these are still treats, not a balanced meal.

Holidays are a time to celebrate and generally associated with sweet treats and abundance. It is important to allow yourself the opportunity to indulge in family favorites, tradition, and celebrations. It is also important to create healthier options wherever you can do so because the abundance of the season is so easily spread from 1 or 2 days into the entire autumn-winter time. Don’t deny yourself from one or two beloved traditions. Do make better choices for yourself and family in all other ways you can do so.

Tips and tricks to healthier treats:

- Replace enriched all white or all-purpose flour with whole wheat pastry flour for more fiber, protein and nutrients but a similar outcome in baking.
- Replace all white, granulated sugar with dried sugar cane juice (brands like Rapunzel and Sucanat). This is real sugar. If you cannot find this in your local store, look for Turbinado sugar as a next-best bet.
- Choose beverages like spiced apple or pear cider made from real juice instead of the pre-made packets (read the ingredients on the packets).
- Roll cookies in finely ground nuts or small seeds instead of sugar.
- You can almost always safely use 25% less sugar than is called for in a recipe without altering the outcome greatly. If a recipe calls for 1 cup sugar, automatically reduce this to ¾ cup.
- Use full-fat coconut milk in place of cream, you can even whip it into a topping for pies or beverages for cholesterol-free, hormone-free joy.
- If a recipe calls for liquid sweeteners (like a syrup), try using melted 100% fruit juice concentrate instead. This works best for fruit salads, smoothies, and other un-cooked desserts but can also sometimes work in baked goods too as long as you don’t need a crispy or crunchy end result.

How To Substitute/Classic Thumb Print Cookie Adaptations

Making a familiar recipe a little healthier can be a challenge. Know why you want to change an ingredient (lower fat, less sugar, etc) to help with the “what” to change. Knowing how that ingredient functions in a recipe will let you know “how”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Recipe</th>
<th>Substitutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>½ cup margarine</td>
<td>½ cup no-hydrogenation margarine, butter, coconut oil OR ½ cup applesauce: will make cookies more cake-like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½ cup sugar</td>
<td>½ cup unbleached, unrefined sugar, coconut sugar, xylitol OR use 1/3 cup sugar overall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 egg</td>
<td>1 Tbsp ground flax or chia seeds + 2 Tbsp warm water, let sit for 3-5 minutes to allow these to form a gel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 cup all purpose flour</td>
<td>1 cup unbleached flour or whole wheat pastry will create the most similar cookie. 1 cup oat flour, gluten free baking blend, or almond meal will also work. I recommend adding ½ teaspoon baking powder or replacing baking soda with baking powder when replacing flours to add extra lift</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
½ cup chopped walnuts | ¼ cup chopped pumpkin or sunflower seeds
½ cup jam | Read labels for all-fruit jam, no added syrups
Sugar for rolling cookies | Roll in chopped nuts instead or skip this step

**RECIPE SUBSTITUTIONS CALLING FOR WHITE/GRANULATED SUGAR**
Replacing sweeteners in recipes is an experiment. Some things will work well and some won’t. Start out by using a sweetener that is most similar to the one called for in a recipe then adapt from there based on the outcome for a less frustrating process. The grams of sugar in each sweetener doesn’t always equal “health”. For example, corn, rice and barley syrup have lower sugar content but can have a higher GI (raising blood sugar levels) than even straight sugar. It also doesn’t indicate other minerals which will help your body.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sweetener</th>
<th>Substitution for 1 cup Sugar</th>
<th>Liquid change if subbing dry sugar for a liquid</th>
<th>Properties</th>
<th>Grams sugar per 1 Tbl</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Xylitol</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Does not work for yeasted recipes &amp; tough for some to digest</td>
<td>“0” (12g sugar alcohol)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sucanat / Rapadura* / Florida Crystals</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>May have a very slight molasses flavor</td>
<td>12g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coconut Sugar</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Slight molasses color and flavor</td>
<td>12g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honey and Agave Nectar</td>
<td>¾ cup</td>
<td>Use 1/8 cup less liquid as these will retain more moisture</td>
<td>Will retain more moisture in baked goods</td>
<td>16g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barley Malt, Brown Rice Syrup, Sorghum</td>
<td>1 ½ cups (less sweet than sugar)</td>
<td>Use slightly less liquid than a recipe calls for</td>
<td>Often imparts an earthy flavor. Great with chocolate.</td>
<td>8-11g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maple Syrup</td>
<td>¾ cup</td>
<td>1/8 cup less</td>
<td>Retains a sweet, syrup flavor</td>
<td>14g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molasses</td>
<td>2/3 cup</td>
<td>1/8 cup less</td>
<td>Retains earthy flavors. Blackstrap molasses will greatly re-flavor</td>
<td>10-13g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mashed banana, prunes or applesauce</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>Decrease other liquids by 1 Tbsp</td>
<td>Retains more moisture and adds mild fruit flavor</td>
<td>1-3g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stevia, liquid or powdered</td>
<td>1/8 teaspoon</td>
<td>Not really good for baking.</td>
<td>May impart bitterness.</td>
<td>0g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn Syrup (organic, non high-fructose)</td>
<td>¾ cup</td>
<td>1/8 cup less</td>
<td>Softens texture and retains moisture</td>
<td>5g</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Crispy Rice Bars**
These crispy rice bars are similar to those of your childhood, but without any high-

Information presented by Ami Karnosh, MS, Nutritionist
YummyMummyCookies.com & author of Let’s Eat: A Book About Food for children
fructose corn syrup or inflammation-promoting margarine. Change out the type of nut butter or use the optional ingredients to suit your tastes.

¾ cup brown rice syrup (or use 2/3 cup maple syrup or agave nectar)
½ cup natural peanut butter
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
4 cups crispy brown rice cereal
Optional: ½ cup dark chocolate chips, ¼ cup chopped nuts
For a winter twist, use mini marshmallows (look for naturally made non-GMO ingredients), dried cherries or cranberries and/or dried kiwi for holiday colors.

Lightly spray an 8x8-inch pan with cooking spray. (Use a larger pan for thinner crisps). In a large saucepan on medium-low, heat the syrup and peanut butter until smooth and well-combined. Remove from heat and add vanilla and rice cereal as well as any optional ingredients. Press into the prepared pan with lightly damp hands or a spatula.

Place in the refrigerator to cool and set-up, at least 15 minutes. Once cooled, use a sharp knife to slice into at least 16 squares. Store in an air-tight container in a cool place or refrigerator.

**Raw “Cookie Dough”**

This recipe was adapted from ChocolateCoveredKatie.com blog and is a fantastic way to meet cravings without the crash from refined sugar and flour. These do not bake into standard cookies, it’s for you “dough fix” but can be frozen.

1 can (1½ cups cooked) white beans like navy, garbanzo, cannellini OR 1 cup soaked nuts
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
1/4 cup almond butter - or your preferred substitution
1/2 cup pure maple syrup, honey, or agave (or sub unrefined granulated cane sugar)
1/4 cup + 1 tablespoon quick oats or ground flax seeds
scant 1/4 tsp sea salt
scant 1/4 tsp baking soda (this gives a cookie dough flavor)
1/3 cup to 1/2 cup chocolate chips (the darker the better but 42% cocoa mass is still quite sweet but not as refined or sugary as semi-sweet chips)
* If you would like a cookie dough “dip” for crackers, add 4 tablespoons milk to the mix

Drain the beans then rinse then extremely well in a colander. Pat the beans dry. Process all ingredients except chips in a strong food processor until completely smooth. Stir in chocolate chips. Eat as is, or dipped using pretzel sticks!
Cover leftovers and store in the fridge.
Caramel Bliss Buttons

If you want a caramel flavored filling or simple treat, mixing dates with a little vanilla, nut butter, and salt magically creates this flavor but with the added benefits from a boost in iron, calcium, fiber, and even a little protein! This recipe is loosely adapted from the Oh She Glows cookbook by Angela Liddon. Makes around 20-25.

1 cup pitted dates
2 teaspoons tahini or peanut or almond butter
½ teaspoon vanilla extract
1/8 teaspoon Sea Salt
1 tablespoon water as needed (won’t be necessary if dates are soft)

¼ cup Chocolate (65% cocoa or greater is best but start where you want)
½ teaspoon coconut oil
Optional toppings: unsweetened coconut, sea salt, hemp seeds, crushed nuts

Directions for the Caramel: Process the pitted dates, tahini, vanilla, and salt in a food processor until a sticky paste forms. Scoop the sticky mixture into a bowl and freeze, uncovered, for about 10 minutes. (Chilling makes the caramel easier to shape into balls.)

Line a plate with parchment paper. Lightly wet your fingers and shape the chilled caramel into small balls, making about 20 balls total. Set the balls on the parchment paper. Place the finished balls in the freezer for 10 minutes to firm up while you melt the chocolate for coating.

In a small saucepan, melt the chocolate and coconut oil over very low heat. When it is mostly melted, remove the pan from the heat and stir until smooth, 3-4 minutes total time.

Remove the caramel balls from the freezer and dunk each ball into the melted chocolate, one at a time. Roll them around with a fork to coat. Tap off any excess chocolate coating and set the balls back on the paper. You might want to stick a toothpick in the top of each ball and sprinkle the balls with a tiny amount of flaked sea salt, hemp seeds, chia seeds, or coconut.

Refrigerate or freeze the balls for at least 20 minutes, or until the chocolate is set. These taste great straight from the freezer and will soften at room temperature.

Tips: If your dates are stiff or dry, soak them in a little water for 30 minutes to soften. If you have leftover melted chocolate, scoop it onto a parchment paper — lined plate and freeze it. The chocolate will harden back up and you won’t have to throw any away. Break up the chocolate and store it for another use. Waste not, want not!