



Healthy Holiday Treats*



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



The holidays bring many joys and challenges. Arming yourself with knowledge and some great recipes can help keep you well. Updating classic recipes can seem daunting but there are a few rules that can result in enjoyable versions that won't greatly alter the outcome.

1. Reduce sugar content by 25% straight from a recipe, or at least by a few tablespoons!
2. Replace refined white sugar (sucrose) with natural, unrefined sugar cane (Sucanat)
3. Replace all-purpose flour with whole wheat pastry flour for a little more fiber, protein, and minerals (one to one ratios, no need to change anything else)
4. Replace refined corn syrups with brown rice syrup or honey or maple syrup
5. Replace honey or sugar in smoothies or drinks with a few drops of no-calorie, no sugar stevia liquid (it's from an herb, not an artificial sweetener), avoid artificial sweeteners.
6. Don't use shortening in a recipe. Instead, replace the full amount with coconut oil or butter for similar outcome but without the harmful, inflammatory fats from shortening.
7. Relax. Indulging in a treat here or there isn't bad for you, make sure you enjoy every bite!

Updated Sugar Cookie Ingredients

¾ cup unrefined sugar
1 cup coconut oil or butter
1 large egg or 1 tablespoon ground flax seed
mixed with 2 tablespoons water to form a gel/egg replacer
2 ½ cups whole wheat pastry flour

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Classic Sugar Cookie

1 ½ cups sugar
1 cup shortening
1 egg
2 ½ cups all-purpose flour

Ready for Better Sugar Cookies

These delicious cookies use less butter and healthier varieties of sugar and flour. Also, using jam, nuts and coconut instead of rolling them in more granulated white sugar offers the sweetness you expect without the added calories or guilt. Makes about 30 cookies.

14 tablespoons butter (shy of 2 sticks), Earth's Balance margarine or virgin coconut oil
1/2 cup unrefined sugar (it looked like dry brown sugar and is often called Sucanat)
1 large egg or equivalent of egg replacer
1 teaspoon vanilla extract or almond extract
1/2 teaspoon sea salt
2 cups whole wheat pastry flour or spelt flour
Optional: 1/4 cup slivered almonds, ground nuts or unsweetened coconut flakes
Optional: About 1/4 cup of your favorite all-fruit jam(s)

Preheat 350 degrees F. In a medium-sized bowl, cream butter and sugar until fluffy. Add egg, vanilla and salt. Mix well then add flour slowly while blending until dough forms. Refrigerate for dough that is easier to roll, or use a gentle hand while warm.

Measure dough out by the tablespoon. Roll into balls, then roll one side into either almonds or coconut. Place on a parchment covered cookie sheet and if you wish, make an indentation in the middle of some with your fingertip. Place a small amount of jam in the center of the cookie. Bake for 10-12 minutes until lightly browned. Cool on wire racks.

Peppermint Mocha Bites

Enjoy the sweet taste of winter dessert without excessive sugar and the bonus of actual nutrition from the seeds, dates, and dark chocolate. Ideally, the chocolate will be greater than 60% for optimal nutrients. If you would like a sugar-free option, Lily's brand chocolate is a great choice and can be found in bars or chips. This recipe has been adapted from Manitoba Harvest recipes. Makes roughly 30-34 fudgy bites.

- 3/4 cup raw almonds or pumpkin seeds (a good source of protein, calcium, and zinc)
- 1/2 cup hemp seeds (a great source for iron and omega3 fatty acids)
- 1 cup pitted dates (the sweetness in your treats that also include iron and fiber)
- 3 tablespoons cocoa powder
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/2 teaspoon peppermint extract
- 1/4 cup mini dark chocolate chips (or lightly chop dark chocolate pieces)
- Optional: 1 teaspoon espresso powder or instant coffee
- Optional: 3 candy canes, crushed (for rolling the bites in)

Add the almonds or pumpkin seeds to a food processor and blend until they are finely ground. Next, add the hemp seeds and then blend until it forms a sticky dough.

Add the cocoa, espresso powder, vanilla and peppermint extract and blend to combine. Then add in the chocolate and pulse a few times so it is mixed in well.

Scoop the dough by the tablespoon and roll into balls. You can roll the balls in the crushed candy canes, coconut flakes, or extra hemp seeds if desired for a beautiful display. Store extra bites in the fridge in an airtight container.

Cinnamon Pumpkin Milk Elixir (Bonus Recipe)

Being on a restricted diet means you may miss out on some of your favorite holiday treats. This energizing shake has anti-inflammatory ingredients that not only taste great but are healthy for you as well. Increase or decrease the spices according to your taste preference.

- 1 cup of nondairy milk like oat, hempseed, coconut, or almond
- 3-4 tablespoons pumpkin puree (more or less to your liking)
- 1 teaspoon (or so) blackstrap molasses (a great source of calcium and iron)
- 1 teaspoon of vanilla (may want to add a little almond extract if you prefer)
- 1 ½ teaspoons or so fresh ginger or roughly ¾ teaspoons or so powdered ginger
- 2 teaspoons - 1 tablespoon cinnamon (more will become a little spicy)
- A pinch of sea salt
- Optional ingredients: 1/2 teaspoon turmeric; a scoop of vanilla protein powder; a few drops stevia liquid for extra sweetness; ice; ½ teaspoon maca powder for extra focused energy or 3/4 teaspoon ashwaganda to help with adrenal health

Place all ingredients into your blender and puree until your mixture is smooth and creamy, about 1 minute. The flavor will get stronger as it sits so feel free to make extra to keep in the refrigerator to simply shake up before serving. I like this at room temperature but you can always gently heat this up for a thick, decadent, and warming elixir.

Almond Spice Cake

This delicious cake is grain-free, sugar-free, and dairy-free. It's perfect for tea time or topped with some coconut whipped cream and berries for an extra special treat. If you want to make more of a spice loaf, use a bread pan and reduce ingredients by half, and cooking time down to 28-30 minutes. Monk Fruit sweetener comes from a gourd and is low calorie and diabetic friendly. However, most brands on the market are mixed with erythritol so that it can be easily substituted for sugar in recipes. Erythritol, like xylitol, is a sugar alcohol that is low-calorie and digested differently than sucrose sugars. However, some people do get bloated if they don't digest well due to intestinal inflammation or recent surgeries so eat a little bit first to determine if you respond well to it or not.

2 cups almond flour (can use almond meal for a more crumbly result)
1/2 cup monk fruit sweetener (or sub xylitol or unrefined natural sugar)
1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon sea salt
2 teaspoons allspice
1 teaspoon cinnamon or pumpkin pie spice
1/2 teaspoon cloves or nutmeg

2 large eggs (or use 2 tablespoons chia seeds blended with 1/4 cup water until gelled)
1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
1/4 cup unsweetened applesauce or pumpkin puree
1/3 cup coconut milk (natural full-fat from a can)
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/2 teaspoon almond extract (optional to leave out if you don't have any on hand)
Optional: 1/2 cup chopped walnuts, 1/3 cup raisins, 1/2 cup dark chocolate chips

Preheat oven to 365F. Line an 9 x 9 inch pan with parchment paper OR spray with coconut oil. Yes, you can use another cooking spray but I prefer coconut since it sets up. Set aside.

In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, sweetener, baking powder, spices, and salt. Next, whisk in the eggs, oil, applesauce, coconut milk, vanilla and almond extracts and mix until well-combined. Fold in any optional ingredients you may wish to use.

Pour batter into prepared pan and bake for about 32-40 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the middle comes out clean.

Allow the cake to cool to room temperature before slicing and serving.
This cake freezes well too so make extra once you get your perfect mixture down!

Some Good Resources for Choosing Natural Sweeteners and Foods:

PCC Natural Markets (www.PCCNaturalMarkets.com) for shopping and recipes

[Natural Strategies for Cancer Patients](#), Russell Blaylock, MD

[Breaking the Food Seduction](#) by Neal Barnard, MD

[The Cancer Survivor's Guide](#) by Neal Barnard and Jennifer Reilly