

Food for Thought

December 2024

Healthy Holiday Desserts

December is a time where many people enjoy their favorite holiday dessert foods. Make a place for your favorite family recipes and traditions, but also try new foods and make new family traditions.



There are many ways to make holiday desserts a little healthier. Ingredient substitutions can work for some recipes, but not others. It might take a little experimenting to see what works with your favorites. Consider these ideas for adjusting a favorite recipe to add a bit of health and nutrition as it makes sense.

- 🌲 Crustless can work well with pumpkin and sweet potato pies, but it won't work for other favorite pies.
- 🌲 Replace heavy cream in cheesecake and cream pies with evaporated fat-free milk. It will reduce the fat and calories in these desserts. You can also use evaporated fat-free milk to make quiche.
- 🌲 Whole wheat flour can be used in place of white flour or go half and half with white flour to add a bit more fiber to your baked goods.
- 🌲 Applesauce can take the place of oil to reduce fat in a baked good while adding a little sweetness.
- 🌲 Bananas are another way to add moisture and sweetness to baked goods.
- 🌲 Greek yogurt can add protein and moisture to recipes. It's a great swap for sour cream if you are looking for a little tanginess.
- 🌲 Tofu or avocado can add creaminess by whipping them into pudding or a mousse and will add protein and heart-healthy fat to your desserts.
- 🌲 Avoid the thick layer of fat and sugar from frostings by topping some cakes, cookies and quick breads with fresh fruit, fruit sauce, or a sprinkle of powdered sugar mixed with a touch of cocoa and/or cinnamon.



🌲 Extracts are powerful flavor boosters. Just be careful, too much can be overpowering. Vanilla, almond, and walnut extracts add flavor and enhance sweetness, so you can reduce the amount of sugar in the recipe.

🌲 Instead of chocolate chips or candies, use dried fruit such as cranberries, blueberries, cherries, or raisins.

Peanut Butter Balls

1 can (15oz.) great northern beans, no salt added, drained and rinsed
1/3 cup honey (or maple syrup)
1 Tablespoon vanilla (optional)
1 1/4 cups peanut butter
1 1/2 cups quick cooking oats



1. In a mixing bowl, mash the beans with a fork until smooth.
2. Add the honey, vanilla, and peanut butter. Stir until fully combined and smooth.
3. Stir in the oats.
4. With clean hands, scoop a tablespoon sized ball of mixture and shape into balls (makes about 50).
5. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator.

Other option: garbanzo beans instead of great northern beans

Avocado Chocolate Pudding

2 ripe avocados, sliced, pureed
1/2 cup chocolate chips, melted
1/3 cup low fat milk
2 tablespoons cocoa powder, unsweetened
1 tablespoon vanilla extract



1. Peel and slice the avocados.
2. Puree them in a food processor or a blender till smooth.
3. Add melted chocolate chips, milk, cocoa powder, and vanilla to the blender.
4. Blend until smooth.

Eat Smart Idaho offers FREE classes & educational events that can help limited resource individuals & families learn how to eat well for less! Ask for Eat Smart Idaho in your County.

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Sources <https://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/marionco/2017/11/14/healthy-holiday-sweets-flavor-calories/>; <https://gingerhultinnutrition.com/healthy-holiday-desserts-by-dietitians/>; retrieved 12/03/24

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