THE SECOND YOUTH WELLNESS

EASY DESSERTS COLLECTION

20
RECIPES
+
TIPS, TRACKERS, LISTS & MORE



SATISFYING PLANT-BASED SWEETS FOR A HEALTHIER GUT

by: MELISSA FURMAN, NBC-HWC

FOUNDER OF THE SECOND YOUTH WELLNESS METHOD

secondyouthwellness.com

EASY DESSERTS COLLECTION

Satisfying Plant-Based Sweets for a Healthier Gut
The Second Youth Wellness Easy Desserts Collection · Melissa Furman, NBC-HWC

DISCLAIMER

No diet, including the eating pattern represented in this cookbook, or any other program should be followed without first consulting a health care professional. If you have any special conditions that require attention, before changing diet, it is always wise to seek counsel of your medical care provider(s) as well as communicate with them regularly regarding the need for, or possible modifications to, medicine dosages, if any.

This cookbook is intended to help you prepare nourishing foods that may help improve health. No guarantee or promise is being made as to the effectiveness of these recipes on an individual's health, good, bad or otherwise.

The information in this cookbook serves for educational & reference purposes. No nutritional advice, recommendation, prescribing or treatment is intended or implied in the information or recipes herein.

CREDITS

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WELCOME

HELLO, SWEET FRIEND!

Can you really enjoy dessert and still love your health? Oh, yes **you can!**



If you're like so many of the women I coach, sweets may feel like the hardest part of eating well. Maybe you've tried to "just say no," only to find yourself standing in the pantry at 9 pm. I get it! Here's the good news: you don't have to give up dessert to have a second youth that's better than the first.

This little cookbook is filled with 20 delicious whole-food, plant-based treats. They're sweetened mostly with fruit, dates and pure maple syrup, built on beans, nuts, seeds and whole grains, and made without butter, eggs or dairy. Most are fuss-free, and many come together in 15 minutes or less.

Some are my tried-and-true family favorites I've made for years. Others are newer recipes I've developed just for you. All of them are meant to be shared at your table with the people you love.

Give yourself grace, start where you are, and have fun in the kitchen. Around here, it's about progress, not perfection!

To your health,
~Melissa

START HERE

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Great For Company
Pretty, crowd-pleasing treats to share at gatherings.

Youth Friendly Kids and grandkids love these. Great for cooking together!

Fast Fix
Hands-on time of about 15 minutes or less.

EVERY RECIPE PAGE INCLUDES

- **Ingredients & Instructions** in simple, numbered steps.
- **Melissa's Tips** for success.
- **Serving Suggestion** to make it pretty or party-ready.
- **Make Life Easier** make-ahead and storage ideas.
- **Ingredients For Good Health** a highlight on one star ingredient.

ABBREVIATIONS

c	cup
T	tablespoon
t	teaspoon
oz	ounce
pkg	package

MY DESSERT PHILOSOPHY

- **Whole foods first.** Fruit, dates, beans, nuts, seeds and whole grains do the heavy lifting.
- **Sweet, not sugary.** A little pure maple syrup or a few dates go a long way.
- **Read the label.** The fewer ingredients, the better. You'll see this tip often!
- **Enjoy it!** Sit down, savor every bite, and share with someone you love.

MELISSA'S TIPS

Read each recipe all the way through before you start, and set out your ingredients first – the French call this "mise en place," which means "setting in place." Many of these treats need time to chill, set or freeze, so plan ahead and let your refrigerator do the work!

PANTRY

YOUR SWEET PANTRY

Stock these whole-food staples and you'll be ready to make almost every recipe in this book. You don't need them all at once. Start with the recipes you're most excited about and build from there!

WHOLE-FOOD SWEETENERS

- ☐ Medjool dates
- ☐ Pure maple syrup
- ☐ Agave syrup
- ☐ Coconut sugar (used sparingly)
- ☐ Ripe bananas
- ☐ Unsweetened applesauce
- ☐ Blackstrap molasses

NUTS, SEEDS & BUTTERS

- ☐ Raw cashews & almonds
- ☐ Pecans, walnuts, pistachios
- ☐ Chia & ground flax seeds
- ☐ Hemp & pumpkin seeds
- ☐ Almond & peanut butter (nuts only)
- ☐ Tahini (sesame only)
- ☐ Unsweetened shredded coconut

FLOURS & WHOLE GRAINS

- ☐ Rolled oats
- ☐ Oat flour
- ☐ Almond flour
- ☐ Short-grain brown rice

BEANS & TOFU

- ☐ Black beans (low-sodium)
- ☐ Chickpeas (low-sodium)
- ☐ Silken tofu
- ☐ Firm tofu

CHOCOLATE & FLAVOR

- ☐ Raw cacao or cocoa powder
- ☐ Pure vanilla & almond extract
- ☐ Instant coffee
- ☐ Cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, cardamom
- ☐ Sea salt
- ☐ Dark chocolate chips (dairy-free, gluten-free)

FRIDGE & FREEZER

- ☐ Unsweetened plant milk
- ☐ Plain dairy-free yogurt
- ☐ Lemons, limes & oranges
- ☐ Frozen berries & mango
- ☐ Canned lite coconut milk
- ☐ Canned pumpkin & pineapple

HELPFUL KITCHEN EQUIPMENT

High-speed blender · Food processor with an 'S' blade · Immersion blender

Parchment paper or silicone baking mat · 8×8 and 9×9-inch baking dishes

Silicone 12-cup muffin tray · 9-inch tart pan · Ice pop molds · Small jars with lids

i You can find links to some of my tried-and-true, favorite healthy kitchen equipment, pantry items and ingredients on my **Favorites** page on my website. Click here for details.



PANTRY

SMART SWAPS

Here's how the recipes in this book turn classic desserts into whole-food treats. Use these swaps to remake your own family favorites, too!

INSTEAD OF…		TRY…
Butter or oil	>	Nut butter, unsweetened applesauce or mashed banana
Eggs	>	"Flax egg" (1T ground flax + 3T water), or chickpea liquid (aquafaba)
Dairy milk & cream	>	Unsweetened soy, almond or certified gluten-free oat milk; lite coconut milk
Cream cheese	>	Soaked raw cashews blended with lemon
White flour	>	Oat flour (this can be certified gluten-free) or almond flour
White sugar	>	Medjool dates, date paste, ripe banana or a little pure maple syrup
Milk chocolate	>	Dark chocolate (70%+), raw cacao powder or cacao nibs
Pie crust	>	Pressed date-nut crust (no baking!)
Cornstarch or gelatin	>	Chia seeds or silken tofu to thicken and set
Ice cream	>	Frozen fruit ice pops, granita or banana "nice cream"
Whipped cream	>	Thick dairy-free yogurt with vanilla

MELISSA'S TIPS

Make a jar of date paste each week: soak 1cup pitted dates in 1¼ cup hot water for 1 hour, partially drain then blend in a high-speed blender with about ½c of the soaking water until smooth. Add 1 teaspoon of lemon juice and re-blend. Then store the date paste in a tightly lidded jar in the fridge. Date paste is great to sweeten oatmeal, smoothies, desserts and more.

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PUDDINGS & PARFAITS GF

NUTRIENT-DENSE CHOCOLATE CHIA PUDDING



FAST FIX YOUTH FRIENDLY

Chia pudding is my secret weapon for chocolate cravings! Stir it together in a few minutes, let the chia seeds work their magic overnight, and dessert (or breakfast!) is waiting for you. This version gets an extra boost from flax and plant protein powder. Love coffee? Try my Fall Mocha Latte Chia Pudding, too!

PREP: 10 MIN **CHILL: 4–6 HRS OR OVERNIGHT** **SERVES: 4-6**

Ingredients

- 4T whole chia seeds (black or white)
- 1¼c plant milk (ie: almond, flax, pea)
- ¼c agave syrup
- 1T flax meal
- 2T plain or chocolate high-quality protein powder (gluten-free)
- 2T raw cacao powder
- 1T pure vanilla extract
- 1t cinnamon (ceylon variety preferred)

Instructions

1. Stir the dry ingredients together.
2. Add the wet ingredients and whisk together well. Let the mixture rest on the counter for about 15 minutes, then whisk again.
3. Chill the pudding in the refrigerator, covered. Let the pudding thicken (thanks to the chia seeds) for at least 4–6 hours or overnight.

MELISSA'S TIPS

This pudding isn't 100% smooth texture like the age-old pudding from a box. There will be some texture. If you don't like the texture, then once firm, you can use an immersion blender to make it smoother, but again, it will not be like the boxed variety (it's MUCH healthier!).

SERVING SUGGESTION

Layer in a glass with fresh berries and a sprinkle of hemp seeds or almond slivers.

MAKE LIFE EASIER

Make a batch on Sunday and portion into small lidded jars for grab-and-go treats all week. Keeps about 4-5 days in the refrigerator.

HIGHLIGHT: INGREDIENTS FOR GOOD HEALTH

Chia & flax: These tiny seeds bring fiber and plant omega-3s, and chia's gel is what makes this pudding thick without any cornstarch.
Gut tip: Chia and flax bring fiber your gut loves. Be sure to sip extra water through the day as you add more fiber.

PUDDINGS & PARFAITS GF

FALL MOCHA LATTE CHIA PUDDING



FAST FIX YOUTH FRIENDLY

A coffee-shop favorite in a jar! Strong coffee, cocoa and a little maple blend into a creamy mocha pudding that sets up in the refrigerator while you get on with your day. Add pumpkin spice in the fall!

PREP: 10 MIN | CHILL: 4–6 HRS | SERVES: 4

Ingredients

- ½c whole chia seeds
- ¾c strong brewed coffee
- 1c plant milk (ie: soy, almond, or certified gluten-free oat)
- 5T pure maple syrup
- 2T unsweetened cocoa powder or raw cacao powder
- ¾t vanilla extract
- pinch of salt
- Optional: 1t pumpkin spice powder (to make it a fall favorite!)
- Optional: 1t cinnamon

Instructions

1. Blend all ingredients with an immersion blender (or in a high-speed blender) until smooth, stopping to scrape down the sides as needed.
2. Pour into individual cups with lids and refrigerate for 4–6 hours. They're ready for easy grab-and-go treats all week.
3. To serve, you may opt to top pudding with fresh berries, coconut flakes, hemp seeds, cinnamon or your favorite garnish.

COACHING CORNER

Chia pudding is a perfect "make-ahead win." When a healthful treat is already waiting in the refrigerator, it's so much easier to say yes to it. Which one will you make this week?

MELISSA'S TIPS

Brew the coffee ahead and let it cool before blending. Use decaf if you'd like to enjoy this one in the evening.
Gut tip: If coffee bothers your tummy, make it with decaf or chicory root-based coffee alternative like Roma.

SERVING SUGGESTION

Serve in small coffee cups or glasses with a sprinkle of cinnamon on top for a true latte-inspired look!

MAKE LIFE EASIER

Portion into lidded jars for grab-and-go treats. Keeps about 4 days in the refrigerator.

PUDDINGS & PARFAITS GF

CHOCOLATE PROTEIN PUDDING

FAST FIX YOUTH FRIENDLY

Silky, rich and ready in minutes, this is the chocolate pudding I make when I need dessert fast. Silken tofu and powdered peanut butter blend into a creamy, protein-rich base, and a little avocado makes it extra smooth. Chocolate and peanut butter: the classic combo!



PREP: 10 MIN CHILL: 1 HR SERVES: 6

Ingredients

- 1 pkg (16oz) silken lite tofu, drained
- 5T cocoa
- 5T powdered peanut butter (gluten-free; like PBFit original)
- ½c pure maple syrup
- 1 small avocado

Instructions

1. Mix all ingredients in a high-speed blender until smooth, stopping to scrape down the sides as needed.
2. Serve cold. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 4 days and stir before serving.

MELISSA'S TIPS

Look for organic, non-GMO tofu. Silken tofu gives the smoothest pudding.

SERVING SUGGESTION

Spoon into small glasses and top with sliced strawberries, a few cacao nibs or chopped peanuts.

MAKE LIFE EASIER

Store this pudding in single-serve containers for quick access to chocolate yumminess!

HIGHLIGHT: INGREDIENTS FOR GOOD HEALTH

Tofu: Made from soybeans, tofu is a great plant source of protein, which makes this pudding a satisfying, protein-rich treat.
Gut tip: Unlike boxed pudding mix, there are no artificial thickeners or flavors here, just whole foods your body recognizes.

PUDDINGS & PARFAITS GF

TROPICAL DREAMS PUDDING



GREAT FOR COMPANY YOUTH FRIENDLY

Close your eyes and take a bite, and you're on a beach somewhere warm. Mango, pineapple and coconut milk whip up with tofu into a light, creamy pudding that's naturally sweet and full of plant protein.

PREP: 10 MIN **CHILL: UNTIL COLD** **SERVES: 6**

Ingredients

- 1 (16oz) bag frozen mango, thawed and drained
- 1½c pineapple, diced
- 1 (16oz) block firm tofu
- ½c canned lite coconut milk
- 3T pure maple syrup (you can sub 1 date for 1T syrup to lower glycemic load)
- 1t almond extract
- ¼t ground cinnamon
- 1/8t ground nutmeg
- Optional: desiccated coconut, diced mango or raspberries for garnish

Instructions

1. Blend all ingredients in a high-speed blender or food processor fitted with an 'S' blade. You can add coconut into the pudding and blend it together, which will make the pudding a little more textured.
2. Serve pudding in individual bowls and garnish as desired.
3. Store in a tightly lidded container in the refrigerator for up to 4 days. Stir before serving.
4. Note: you can use frozen pineapple too, but thaw it first.

MELISSA'S TIPS

Thaw the mango in the refrigerator overnight so it blends silky smooth. Pat the tofu dry with a clean towel before it goes in the blender, and your pudding will be thick and creamy.

SERVING SUGGESTION

Spoon into small glasses and top with a sprinkle of coconut and a few fresh raspberries or more diced mango for a pretty dessert with beach vibes.

MAKE LIFE EASIER

Keep a bag of frozen mango in the freezer, a block of tofu in the refrigerator, and a can of coconut milk in the pantry, plus your staples, and you're always just a few minutes away from a tropical treat!

HIGHLIGHT: INGREDIENTS FOR GOOD HEALTH

Mango: Sweet, juicy mango brings vitamin C and beta-carotene, and blended with tofu it makes a creamy, plant-protein-rich pudding.
Gut tip: Mango and pineapple do most of the sweetening, with no refined sugar (a heartburn trigger for some).

PUDDINGS & PARFAITS GF

BANANA CRUNCH CHIA PARFAIT



FAST FIX YOUTH FRIENDLY GREAT FOR COMPANY

You already know I love chocolate chia pudding (see my Nutrient-Dense Chocolate Chia Pudding). But chia can do SO much more! These layered jars are totally chocolate-free: banana-cinnamon chia, a date-tahini "toffee", fresh banana and a toasted oat-pecan crunch. Make them tonight and breakfast or dessert is ready tomorrow.

PREP: 15–20 MIN **CHILL: 2 HRS OR OVERNIGHT** **SERVES: 2**

THE CHIA BASICS

3T whole chia seeds per ¾c liquid makes 2 servings. Stir, wait 10 minutes, stir again to break up clumps, then chill at least 2 hours or overnight.

BANANA CRUNCH PARFAIT

Banana-cinnamon chia layered with date-tahini "toffee", fresh banana and a toasted oat-pecan crunch.

BANANA CHIA LAYER

- 1 ripe banana, mashed well with a fork
- ¾c unsweetened soy milk (or other plant milk)
- 3T whole chia seeds
- ½t cinnamon, ½t pure vanilla extract, pinch of sea salt

DATE-TAHINI TOFFEE

- 4 Medjool dates, pitted & soaked in hot water 5 minutes, drained
- 1½T tahini (read the label: sesame only)
- 3T hot water, ¼t pure vanilla extract
- ½t miso (gluten-free)

OAT-PECAN CRUNCH & LAYERS

- ¼c rolled oats (certified gluten-free) + 2T chopped pecans + pinch of cinnamon
- 1 small banana, sliced into coins

1. Whisk the mashed banana, milk, chia, cinnamon, vanilla and salt. Wait 10 minutes, whisk again, then cover and chill at least 2 hours or overnight.
2. For the toffee, blend the dates, tahini, hot water, vanilla and miso until thick and smooth.
3. For the crunch, toast the oats and pecans in a dry skillet over medium heat, stirring often, until golden, 3–4 minutes. Stir in the cinnamon and let cool.
4. Layer in two jars: banana chia, a spoonful of toffee, banana coins, then crunch. Repeat and finish with crunch on top.

HIGHLIGHT: INGREDIENTS FOR GOOD HEALTH

Tahini: Ground sesame seeds bring a rich, toasty flavor plus plant protein and minerals, so the "toffee" is made from a whole food.
Gut tip: Oats, chia and banana all bring fiber that feeds your good gut bugs. Jot down how you feel afterward in your Weekly Treat Tracker.

MELISSA'S TIPS

Keep chia seeds in the refrigerator or freezer so they stay fresh.
Read the labels on nut and seed butters: just the nuts or seeds, and maybe a little salt.

SERVING SUGGESTION

Make a double batch for a brunch or party "parfait bar." Set out the layers in bowls and let guests build their own jars!

MAKE LIFE EASIER

The chia layer and toffee keep up to 3 days, covered, in the refrigerator. Store the oat crunch separately at room temperature and add it just before serving so it stays crisp.

PUDDINGS & PARFAITS GF

STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE PARFAITS



GREAT FOR COMPANY YOUTH FRIENDLY

Everything you love about strawberry shortcake, tucked into a little jar! A lightly sweet oat biscuit crumbles over juicy maple strawberries and a cloud of vanilla cashew cream. No fussing with biscuit cutters at the table, and every guest gets their own. Perfect for a spring brunch or a backyard cookout.

PREP: 25 MIN BAKE: 13–14 MIN + 30 MIN CHILL SERVES: ABOUT 6 JARS

Ingredients

- Oat biscuit: 1c oat flour (certified gluten-free), ½c almond flour, 1t baking powder (gluten-free), pinch of salt
- 3T maple syrup, 2T applesauce, 1T almond butter, 1t vanilla

MAPLE STRAWBERRIES

- 1lb fresh strawberries, hulled & sliced
- 1–2T pure maple syrup
- 1t fresh lemon juice

VANILLA CASHEW CREAM

- 1c raw cashews, soaked at least 2 hours (or 15 min in just-boiled water), drained
- ⅓–½c unsweetened plant milk
- 2–3T maple syrup + 1t vanilla + pinch of sea salt
- a few whole strawberries or mint (optional)

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350°F and line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. For the biscuit, stir the oat flour, almond flour, baking powder and salt in a bowl. Add the maple syrup, applesauce, almond butter and vanilla and mix into a soft dough.
3. Drop the dough in small clumps onto the parchment (it doesn't need to look perfect). Bake 13–14 minutes, until lightly golden at the edges. Cool, then break into bite-size crumbs.
4. Toss the strawberries with maple syrup and lemon juice. Let them sit 10–15 minutes so they get juicy.
5. For the cream, blend the cashews, ⅓c plant milk, 2T maple syrup, vanilla and salt until completely smooth and fluffy. Add a splash more milk if needed, and more maple to taste.
6. Layer the jars: biscuit crumbs, strawberries with some juice, a spoonful of cream, then repeat. Finish with a little cream and a berry or mint leaf on top. Chill about 30 minutes before serving, or enjoy right away.

MELISSA'S TIPS

Choose brightly colored strawberries that smell sweet at the stem end. If berries are out of season, thawed frozen strawberries work; drain off the extra liquid so the jars don't get watery.

SERVING SUGGESTION

Set the jars on a tray for a brunch buffet, or pack them in a cooler for a picnic. Keep the cream and crumbs separate until serving if you're traveling.

MAKE LIFE EASIER

Bake the biscuit and blend the cream up to a day ahead. Store crumbs airtight at room temperature and cream covered in the refrigerator. Assemble the jars within a few hours of serving so the crumbs stay a little crisp.

HIGHLIGHT: INGREDIENTS FOR GOOD HEALTH

Strawberries: These ruby berries bring vitamin C, fiber and that classic shortcake flavor, with no need for a heavy cake underneath.
Gut tip: Cashew cream replaces heavy whipped cream, so these parfaits feel light after a meal.

BROWNIES & BARK GF

FIBER-RICH BLACK BEAN BROWNIES



GREAT FOR COMPANY YOUTH FRIENDLY

Yes, there are beans in these brownies, and no, nobody will guess! Black beans make them fudgy and rich while sneaking in fiber and plant protein. These have been a favorite in my kitchen for years, and they're my go-to when I want a chocolate treat I can feel good about sharing.

PREP: 15 MIN | BAKE: ~30 MIN | SERVES: 16 SQUARES | PAN: 8×8-INCH (OR 9x9-INCH)

Ingredients

- 1 (15oz) can black beans, drained
- ¼c creamy raw almond butter (or peanut butter)*
- 6T raw cacao powder
- 2T ground flax seeds (or flax seed meal)
- 2t pure vanilla extract
- 1c coconut sugar
- 2t balsamic vinegar
- ¼t sea salt
- ½t baking soda
- 1t cinnamon
- ¼c walnuts, ground
- ¾c vegan chocolate chips (gluten-free; like Enjoy Life brand), plus a few extra for the top

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Line a 8×8-inch or 9x9-inch square baking dish with parchment paper (this is so you don't have to use oil-based spray).
3. In a food processor fitted with an 'S' blade, process beans until smooth.
4. Then add to the beans: nut butter, cacao powder, flax seeds, vanilla, sugar, vinegar, salt, baking soda, cinnamon and walnuts.
5. Process until a smooth, thick batter is formed, stopping occasionally to scrape down the sides to make sure everything is mixed evenly.
6. Add the chocolate chips and pulse a few times to mix in.
7. Scoop the batter into the lined baking dish. Note: the batter will be rather thick, so using a spatula will help spread it evenly in the dish. Decorate the top with a few extra chocolate chips.
8. Bake at 350°F until the top begins to crack and the center feels firm to a light touch, about 30 minutes. Add more time to bake if needed.
9. Allow brownies to cool completely before cutting.
10. Serve at room temperature, or slightly warmed, and store leftovers in a sealed container in the refrigerator.

MELISSA'S TIPS

*Be sure to read the label and use only nut butter that contains no added oil or fillers. It should list **only** nuts and maybe salt.

TRY IT AS MUFFINS

This recipe can be made as muffins or mini muffins. Adjust baking time as needed.

SERVING SUGGESTION

Top a warm brownie with fresh raspberries and a spoonful of dairy-free yogurt.

HIGHLIGHT: INGREDIENTS FOR GOOD HEALTH

Black beans: Beans bring fiber and plant protein to dessert, which helps a sweet treat feel more satisfying.
Gut tip: New to beans? Start with one small square and give your body time to get used to the extra fiber from beans.

BROWNIES & BARK GF

SWEET POTATO BROWNIES



YOUTH FRIENDLY GREAT FOR COMPANY

Sweet potato in a brownie? Oh, yes you can! These are soft, fudgy and chocolatey, with no eggs and no oil. Mashed sweet potato and ripe banana keep them moist, and the liquid from a can of chickpeas holds everything together. They're one of my favorite ways to enjoy a chocolate treat with the people I love.

PREP: 15 MIN BAKE: 25–30 MIN · 8×8 PAN SERVES: 16 SQUARES

Ingredients

- 1 c cooked mashed sweet potato
- 1 medium ripe banana, mashed
- ½ c aquafaba
- ½ c maple syrup or date paste
- 1 c oat flour (certified gluten-free)
- ½ c unsweetened cocoa
- 1 t baking powder (gluten-free)
- 1 t vanilla
- ¼ t salt

Instructions

1. Mash the sweet potato and banana until smooth.
2. Whisk in the aquafaba, syrup and vanilla.
3. Mix the dry ingredients separately.
4. Fold the two together without overmixing. Add a splash of plant milk if the batter is too thick.
5. Bake at 350°F for 25–30 min in an 8×8 pan, until a toothpick shows moist crumbs.
6. Pull them slightly early, since they firm up as they cool.
7. Optional: flaky salt right out of the oven.

MELISSA'S TIPS

Roast an extra sweet potato with dinner and you're halfway to brownies. Or try canned (drained) sweet potatoes if you're in a hurry. Chill the brownies before cutting for neat squares.

SERVING SUGGESTION

Serve a square with fresh raspberries and a spoonful of dairy-free yogurt.

MAKE LIFE EASIER

Aquafaba is the liquid from a can of chickpeas. Save the chickpeas for a salad or hummus!

HIGHLIGHT: INGREDIENTS FOR GOOD HEALTH

Sweet potato: Naturally sweet and full of fiber, sweet potato keeps these brownies moist with no oil and no eggs.
Gut tip: No butter, oil, eggs or refined sugars, so these feel much lighter than the typical heavy, greasy and super-sweet brownie.

BROWNIES & BARK GF

DARK CHOCOLATE FRUIT & NUT BARK



FAST FIX GREAT FOR COMPANY

When a chocolate craving hits, a small piece of this bark really hits the spot. It's mostly nuts, seeds and fruit, held together with just enough dark chocolate. Break it into pieces and keep it in the refrigerator, and you'll always have a little something sweet ready to go.

PREP: 10 MIN | CHILL: 30 MIN | MAKES: ABOUT 16 PIECES

Ingredients

- 1c (6oz) dark chocolate chips, 70% cacao or higher (dairy-free, gluten-free). For these, I love Hu chocolate chips: vegan, rich, dark and silky
- ⅓c roughly chopped raw almonds or pistachios
- ¼c unsweetened dried cranberries or cherries (no sugar added; I make mine with cranberries)
- 2T pumpkin seeds
- 1T hemp seeds
- finely grated zest of 1 orange (optional)
- pinch of flaky sea salt

Instructions

1. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. In a small food processor (like a Nutribullet), blitz the cranberries (or cherries), pumpkin seeds and hemp seeds just until coarsely crumbled. Put the blitzed mix and the chopped nuts in a small bowl.
3. Melt the chocolate in a heat-safe bowl set over a pot of simmering water, stirring until smooth. (Or microwave in 30-second bursts, stirring between each.)
4. Pour the chocolate onto the parchment and spread it into a thin rectangle, about ¼ inch thick.
5. Right away, scatter the fruit, seed and nut mix and the orange zest over the top. Press gently so they stick. Sprinkle with a few flakes of salt.
6. Chill until firm, about 30 minutes.
7. Break into about 16 pieces and store in a sealed container in the refrigerator.

MELISSA'S TIPS

Read the label! Choose chocolate with cacao (or chocolate) listed first and no milk ingredients. The higher the cacao percentage, the less sugar. Dried fruit should list only the fruit if possible (no added sugar).

SERVING SUGGESTION

Holiday gifts made easy: wrap pieces in a cellophane bag or tin with a ribbon for a sweet hostess, teacher or neighbor gift.

MAKE LIFE EASIER

Swap in whatever nuts, seeds and dried fruit you have in the pantry.

HIGHLIGHT: INGREDIENTS FOR GOOD HEALTH

Pumpkin seeds: These little green seeds add crunch plus minerals like magnesium and zinc.
Gut tip: Nuts, seeds and fruit add fiber. Savor one piece slowly and notice how satisfied you feel.

COOKIES GF

GINGERBREAD COOKIES

YOUTH FRIENDLY GREAT FOR COMPANY

Nothing says “holidays” like the smell of gingerbread in the oven! These cookies are soft, warmly spiced and sweetened with molasses and maple syrup instead of white sugar. Roll them into balls for quick crinkle cookies, or roll and cut shapes with the grandkids. Either way, the kitchen will smell amazing.



PREP: 15 MIN + 30 MIN CHILL **BAKE: 10–12 MIN** **MAKES: ABOUT 18 COOKIES**

Ingredients

DRY

- 1½c oat flour (certified gluten-free)
- ½c almond flour
- 1½t ground ginger
- 1t cinnamon
- ¼t ground cloves
- ¼t nutmeg
- ½t baking soda
- ¼t sea salt

WET

- 1T ground flax seeds + 3T water
- ¼c unsulphured blackstrap molasses
- ¼c pure maple syrup
- ¼c almond butter (almonds only)
- 2T unsweetened applesauce
- 1t pure vanilla extract

Instructions

1. Stir the flax and water together in a large bowl and let it thicken for 5 minutes.
2. Whisk in the molasses, maple syrup, almond butter, applesauce and vanilla until smooth.
3. In a second bowl, whisk all the dry ingredients. Add to the wet and stir into a soft dough.
4. Cover and chill the dough for 30 minutes so it’s easier to handle.
5. Preheat oven to 350°F and line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
6. Roll the dough into 1-inch balls and flatten to about ½ inch with your palm.
7. Bake 10–12 minutes, until the edges are set. Cool 5 minutes on the sheet, then move to a wire cooling rack.

MELISSA’S TIPS

These are soft-baked cookies, so they firm up as they cool. Don’t overbake! Read the label on the molasses: unsulphured, with molasses as the only ingredient.

SERVING SUGGESTION

Decorate with a simple “icing” of cashew cream piped from a sandwich bag, or press a pecan half into each cookie before baking.

MAKE LIFE EASIER

Freeze flattened dough balls on a tray, then store in a bag. Bake straight from frozen, adding 1–2 minutes.

HIGHLIGHT: INGREDIENTS FOR GOOD HEALTH

Ginger: This warming spice brings big flavor, so you need less sweetener.
Gut tip: Oat and almond flour replace refined white flour, so these cookies keep things whole-food and simple while boosting the nutrient quality.

COOKIES GF

LEMON LAVENDER ALMOND COOKIES



FAST FIX GREAT FOR COMPANY

These little cookies taste like a spring garden: bright lemon, a whisper of lavender and buttery almond flour. They come together in one bowl in about 15 minutes and stay soft and gooey in the middle. Perfect with a cup of tea and a friend.

PREP: 15 MIN **BAKE: 13–14 MIN** **MAKES: ABOUT 12-16 COOKIES**

Ingredients

- 1¼c almond flour
- 2T pure lemon juice
- ¼c pure maple syrup
- 1t dried lemon peel
- ½t dried lavender
- ½t almond extract
- ½t baking powder (gluten-free)

Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line a small baking sheet with parchment paper or a silicone baking mat. Set aside.
2. Stir together almond flour, lemon peel, lavender and baking powder in a mixing bowl.
3. Mix in remaining ingredients (lemon juice, syrup, extract). Mix until well combined. Dough will be very moist.
4. Scoop out dough using a small cookie scoop or spoon to form balls, and place them on the prepared baking sheet. Press lightly to flatten a little bit, using your fingers, or a fork to make a striped pattern.
5. Bake at 350°F for 13–14 minutes, or until lightly browned.
6. Cool for 5 minutes on the baking sheet, then transfer to a cooling rack to cool completely.
7. Store in a tightly lidded container in the refrigerator. Cookies will be moist and gooey.

MELISSA'S TIPS

You can make these without the lavender and they're just as delicious.

SERVING SUGGESTION

Arrange on a pretty plate with fresh berries and lemon slices for a tea party or bridal shower.

MAKE LIFE EASIER

Keep a jar of dried lemon peel and culinary lavender in the pantry so these are always a fast-fix treat away.

HIGHLIGHT: INGREDIENTS FOR GOOD HEALTH

Almonds: Almond flour is simply ground almonds, so these cookies bring healthy fats, vitamin E and a little plant protein.
Gut tip: Just a few whole-food ingredients, with no refined flour or white sugar. Simple is good!

COOKIES GF

COCONUT MACAROONS



GREAT FOR COMPANY

Soft, chewy and toasted on the outside, these little coconut bites are my go-to when I want something sweet without a lot of fuss. No candy thermometer and no long bake: shredded coconut, a little almond and oat flour, maple syrup, and whipped aquafaba to help them hold their shape. Dip them in dark chocolate if you're feeling fancy, or leave them plain for the cookie jar.

PREP: 20 MIN | **BAKE: 18 MIN** | **MAKES: ABOUT 14 MACAROONS**

Ingredients

- 2½c unsweetened shredded coconut
- ⅓c almond flour
- 2T oat flour (certified gluten-free)
- pinch of sea salt
- 1T ground flax seeds + 2T water (1 "flax egg")
- ⅓c pure maple syrup
- 2T unsweetened applesauce
- 1t pure vanilla extract
- ½t almond extract (optional)
- ¼c aquafaba (the liquid from a can of chickpeas) + ¼t cream of tartar

OPTIONAL CHOCOLATE DIP

- ⅓c dark chocolate chips, 70% cacao or higher (dairy-free, gluten-free)
- 1t coconut oil (optional, for a smoother melt)

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 325°F and line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Stir the flax and water together and let it sit 5 minutes to gel.
3. In a large bowl, stir the coconut, almond flour, oat flour and salt together.
4. In a small bowl, stir (don't whisk) the maple syrup, applesauce, vanilla, almond extract and flax gel, then pour over the coconut and stir until every shred looks damp.
5. Whip the aquafaba with the cream of tartar to stiff peaks, then gently fold it into the coconut mixture.
6. Use a large 2-inch cookie scoop and pack it with your hands so each macaroon holds together. Mound them on the baking sheet and leave them as mounds (about 14).
7. Bake 18 minutes, until the tops and edges are golden. Cool fully on the sheet before moving them.
8. For the optional dip, melt the chocolate (and coconut oil, if using) over simmering water or in short microwave bursts. Once the macaroons are completely cool, dip the bottoms, using a fork to support them so they don't fall apart, and set them back on the parchment until firm.

MELISSA'S TIPS

Read the label on the coconut: you want unsweetened shredded (or flaked) coconut, with coconut as the only ingredient. Sweetened bagged coconut adds a lot of cane sugar and will throw off the texture and taste.

SERVING SUGGESTION

Pile them on a platter with fresh berries for a simple dessert tray. For a party, dip half of each batch in chocolate and leave half plain so guests can choose.

MAKE LIFE EASIER

Keep them in a sealed container in the refrigerator; they hold together best cold.

HIGHLIGHT: INGREDIENTS FOR GOOD HEALTH

Coconut: Unsweetened coconut brings fiber and satisfying plant fats, so a couple of these little bites go a long way.
Gut tip: Unsweetened coconut brings fiber without the cane sugar in bagged sweetened coconut. Read the label!

COOKIES GF

SWEET POTATO OATMEAL COOKIES



YOUTH FRIENDLY

Oatmeal cookies, but make them cozy! Mashed sweet potato replaces the butter and eggs, so these cookies are soft, moist and gently spiced with cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves and ginger. Just 2 tablespoons of maple syrup sweeten the whole batch, with little bursts of chocolate and raisins in every bite.

PREP: 20 MIN + TIME TO BAKE THE SWEET POTATO **BAKE: 13–15 MIN** **MAKES: ABOUT 18 COOKIES**

Ingredients

- 1T ground flax seeds + 3T water (1 "flax egg")
- 1c mashed sweet potato (cooked & cooled)
- 2T pure maple syrup
- 1t pure vanilla extract
- 1½c rolled oats (certified gluten-free)
- ½c almond flour
- ½t baking powder (gluten-free)
- ½t cinnamon
- ¼t nutmeg
- ⅛t ground cloves
- ⅛t ground ginger
- ⅛t sea salt
- ¼c dairy-free chocolate chips (gluten-free)
- ¼c raisins

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350°F and line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Stir the flax and water together in a small bowl and let it sit 5 minutes to gel.
3. In a medium bowl, mix the cooked sweet potato, maple syrup, vanilla and gelled flax mixture.
4. Add the oats, almond flour, baking powder, spices and salt, and mix until well combined.
5. Fold in the chocolate chips and raisins. The dough will be thick.
6. Scoop about 2 tablespoons of dough per cookie onto the sheet, 1–2 inches apart. Flatten each mound slightly; they don't spread much, if at all.
7. Bake 13–15 minutes, until the bottoms are lightly browned and the edges are set.
8. Cool 5 minutes, then enjoy! Once fully cool, store in a tightly sealed container in the refrigerator for up to a week.

MELISSA'S TIPS

I love sweet potatoes! They keep these cookies soft and moist with no butter or oil, and they bring vitamin A (from beta-carotene), vitamin C, potassium and fiber. Cozy comfort food, the healthful way!
Save time by using canned sweet potatoes if you don't have time to bake your own.

SERVING SUGGESTION

Enjoy one warm with a cup of tea or a glass of unsweetened plant milk, or pack a couple for a cozy midday snack.

MAKE LIFE EASIER

Bake extra sweet potatoes on the weekend. Mashed, they keep 4–5 days in the refrigerator, ready for these cookies or Sweet Potato Brownies (page 15).

HIGHLIGHT: INGREDIENTS FOR GOOD HEALTH

Oats: Whole-grain oats bring fiber that helps keep you satisfied. Read the label: choose oats marked certified gluten-free.
Gut tip: Sweet potato and oats team up for fiber, with no butter or oil like typical oatmeal cookies.

CAKES, PIES & TARTS GF

CARROT CAKE SNACK CAKE



GREAT FOR COMPANY YOUTH FRIENDLY

Carrot cake is one of those desserts that feels like a warm hug, doesn't it? This snack-cake version is baked in one pan, sweetened with applesauce and pure maple syrup, and loaded with grated carrots, raisins and walnuts. A swoosh of creamy cashew "frosting" makes it party-ready, and a plain square is a lovely afternoon treat with a cup of tea.

PREP: 20 MIN **BAKE: 35 MIN** **SERVES: 9 SQUARES** **PAN: 8×8-INCH (OR 9x9-INCH)**

Ingredients

DRY

- 1½c oat flour (certified gluten-free)
- 1t baking powder (gluten-free)
- ½t baking soda
- 2t cinnamon
- ½t ground ginger
- ¼t nutmeg
- ¼t sea salt

WET

- 2T ground flax seeds + 5T water (2 "flax eggs")
- 1c unsweetened applesauce
- ½c pure maple syrup
- ¼c unsweetened plant milk
- 1t pure vanilla extract

FOLD-INS

- 1½c finely grated carrots (about 3 medium)
- 1/3c raisins
- 1/3c chopped walnuts

CASHEW "FROSTING" (OPTIONAL)

- ½c raw cashews, soaked 2 hours, drained
- 2T lemon juice + 2T pure maple syrup
- 2–4T water, 1t vanilla (clear vanilla if you have it, to keep the frosting white)

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line an 8×8-inch (or 9x9-inch) baking dish with parchment paper (no oil spray needed).
2. Stir the flax and water together in a large bowl and let it sit 5 minutes to thicken.
3. In a second bowl, gently stir together all the dry ingredients.
4. Add the applesauce, maple syrup, plant milk and vanilla to the flax and stir well.
5. Add the dry ingredients to the wet and stir just until combined. Fold in the carrots, raisins and walnuts.
6. Spread the batter in the lined dish. Bake 35 minutes, until a toothpick in the center comes out clean.
7. Cool completely in the pan, then lift out by the parchment and cut into 9 squares.
8. For the frosting, blend all frosting ingredients in a personal blender (like a Nutribullet), stopping several times to scrape down the sides and re-blend, until silky smooth. Add water 1T at a time only as needed. Spread on the cooled cake.

MELISSA'S TIPS

Grate the carrots on the small holes of a box grater so they melt into the cake. Read the label on your applesauce: you want apples (and maybe a little lemon juice) only.

SERVING SUGGESTION

Dust with cinnamon and top each square with a walnut half for a bakery look.

MAKE LIFE EASIER

Unfrosted squares freeze beautifully. Wrap individually and thaw on the counter for a ready-made snack.

HIGHLIGHT: INGREDIENTS FOR GOOD HEALTH

Carrots: Their bright orange color comes from beta-carotene, which the body can turn into vitamin A.
Gut tip: Applesauce and maple syrup replace the oil and white sugar in typical carrot cake for a lighter slice.

CAKES, PIES & TARTS GF

MINI LEMON CASHEW "CHEESECAKES"



GREAT FOR COMPANY

Creamy, tangy and bright, these little lemon "cheesecakes" taste fancy but couldn't be easier. There's no oven, no cream cheese and no refined sugar. Just a nutty date crust and a silky cashew-lemon filling that sets up in the freezer. Make them ahead and pull them out when company comes!

PREP: 25 MIN + SOAK | FREEZE: 3 HRS | MAKES: 12 MINIS | PAN: 12-CUP MUFFIN TRAY

Ingredients

CRUST

- 1c raw almonds or walnuts
- 8 Medjool dates, pitted (soak 5 minutes if firm)
- pinch of sea salt

LEMON FILLING

- 1½c raw cashews, soaked at least 2 hours (or 15 minutes in just-boiled water), drained & rinsed
- 1/3c fresh lemon juice + finely grated zest of 1 lemon
- ¼c pure maple syrup
- 1/3c canned lite coconut milk (or unsweetened plant milk)
- 1t pure vanilla extract
- pinch of sea salt

TOPPINGS

- fresh berries, extra lemon zest, mint leaves

Instructions

1. Line a 12-cup muffin tin with paper or silicone liners.
2. For the crust, pulse the nuts in a food processor until finely chopped. Add the dates and salt and process until the mixture sticks together when pinched.
3. Press about 1T of crust firmly into the bottom of each liner.
4. For the filling, blend all filling ingredients in a high-speed blender until completely smooth and creamy, 1–2 minutes, scraping down the sides.
5. Divide the filling over the crusts and smooth the tops. Tap the pan on the counter to release air bubbles.
6. Freeze until firm, about 3 hours.
7. Let stand 10–15 minutes before serving. Top with berries and lemon zest.

MELISSA'S TIPS

Zest the lemon before you juice it – it's so much easier! Soaking the cashews is the secret to a silky filling, especially if you don't have a high-speed blender.

SERVING SUGGESTION

Top with fresh raspberries for a pretty pink finish.

MAKE LIFE EASIER

Store in a sealed container in the freezer for up to 1 month and pull out one at a time.

HIGHLIGHT: INGREDIENTS FOR GOOD HEALTH

Lemons: Lemon juice and zest bring vitamin C and a big burst of flavor, so you need less sweetener to make dessert sing.
Gut tip: Soaked cashews make this creamy with no cream cheese, a nice option if dairy leaves you feeling heavy, bloated or crampy.

CAKES, PIES & TARTS GF

NO-BAKE PUMPKIN PIE MINIS WITH DATE-PECAN CRUST



GREAT FOR COMPANY YOUTH FRIENDLY

Pumpkin pie just says "holidays," doesn't it? Most pies come with a buttery crust, sweetened condensed milk and a lot of refined sugar, and that can leave you feeling sluggish. These little jars give you everything you love about pumpkin pie with no oven at all. The crust is just pecans, oats and dates, and the creamy filling gets its silkiness from cashews. Bring a tray to the family gathering and watch them disappear!

PREP: 25 MIN | CHILL: 2 HRS | SERVES: 6 (SMALL 4–6OZ JARS)

Ingredients

DATE-PECAN CRUST

- 1c raw pecans
- ½c rolled oats (certified gluten-free)
- 6 Medjool dates, pitted (soak in hot water 5 minutes if dry, then drain)
- ½t cinnamon, pinch of salt

PUMPKIN FILLING

- 1c raw cashews, soaked at least 2 hours (or 15 minutes in just-boiled water), drained & rinsed
- 1 (15oz) can pure pumpkin (not pumpkin pie filling)
- 1/3c pure maple syrup
- 1t pure vanilla extract
- 2t pumpkin pie spice (or 1½t cinnamon + ½t ginger + ¼t nutmeg + pinch cloves)
- pinch of salt
- 2T unsweetened plant milk

TOPPINGS

- chopped pecans, a dusting of cinnamon, a dollop of unsweetened dairy-free yogurt

Instructions

1. For the crust, pulse the pecans and oats in a food processor fitted with an 'S' blade until coarsely ground. Add the dates, cinnamon and salt and process until the mixture sticks together when pinched. Set aside about 2T for topping.
2. Divide the rest among six small jars (about 2T each) and press down firmly with the back of a spoon.
3. For the filling, rinse out the processor (or use a high-speed blender). Add the cashews, pumpkin, maple syrup, plant milk, vanilla, spice and salt. Blend until completely smooth, scraping down the sides.
4. Taste and adjust: more syrup for sweetness or more spice for a bolder flavor.
5. Spoon the filling over the crust and sprinkle with the reserved crumbs. Cover and chill at least 2 hours, until set.
6. Top just before serving.

MELISSA'S TIPS

Read the label on the can! Pumpkin pie filling already has sugar and other ingredients added. You want 100% pure pumpkin, where pumpkin is the only ingredient.

SERVING SUGGESTION

Set the jars on a tray with little spoons tied with twine for a festive dessert table. It's a sweet hostess gift, too!

MAKE LIFE EASIER

Make the jars up to 2 days ahead and keep them covered in the refrigerator. Soak your cashews the night before so they're ready when you are.

HIGHLIGHT: INGREDIENTS FOR GOOD HEALTH

Pumpkin: Its bright orange color comes from beta-carotene, which the body can turn into vitamin A. Pumpkin also brings fiber to dessert. That's a win!

Gut tip: Pumpkin, dates and oats all bring fiber and flavor without refined sugars. Track how you feel after a fiber-rich treat this week.

CAKES, PIES & TARTS GF

FRESH BERRY TART WITH DATE-ALMOND CRUST



GREAT FOR COMPANY

This is the dessert I bring when I want a "wow." A press-in date-almond crust, a creamy vanilla cashew filling, and a crown of fresh berries. It looks like it came from a French bakery, but it's no-bake and made from whole foods. Summer on a plate!

PREP: 30 MIN + SOAK	CHILL: 2 HRS	SERVES: 12	PAN: 9-INCH TART PAN

Ingredients

DATE-ALMOND CRUST

- 1½c raw almonds
- 1c Medjool dates, pitted (about 10)
- 2T unsweetened shredded coconut
- pinch of sea salt

VANILLA CREAM FILLING

- 2c raw cashews, soaked at least 2 hours, drained & rinsed
- 1c unsweetened dairy-free yogurt (soy or coconut)
- 6T pure maple syrup
- 2T fresh lemon juice + zest of 1 lemon
- 2t pure vanilla extract

TOPPING

- 3c mixed fresh berries (strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, blackberries)
- optional: mint, lemon zest, dried cranberry seeds (anytime) or pomegranate seeds (just before serving)

Instructions

1. Line the bottom of a 9-inch tart pan (with a removable bottom) with a circle of parchment paper.
2. For the crust, pulse the almonds in a food processor until finely ground. Add the dates, coconut and salt and process until the mixture sticks together when pinched.
3. Press the crust evenly into the bottom and about ½–1 inch up the sides of the pan with your fingers (a piece of wax paper helps smooth it). Chill while you make the filling.
4. For the filling, blend all filling ingredients (soaked cashews only!) in a high-speed blender until completely smooth.
5. Spread the filling into the crust. Chill at least 2 hours, until set.
6. Just before serving, arrange the berries on top in circles (or pile them on!). Garnish with mint.

MELISSA'S TIPS

Important: soak the cashews as directed, or the filling will be grainy and lumpy. Wet your fingers or use the bottom of a measuring cup to press the crust evenly. Slice the strawberries but leave the smaller berries whole so they stay juicy.

SERVING SUGGESTION

For a holiday table, top with pomegranate seeds and kiwi slices instead of summer berries.

MAKE LIFE EASIER

Make the crust and filling a day ahead; add the berries right before serving so the tart stays fresh.

HIGHLIGHT: INGREDIENTS FOR GOOD HEALTH

Berries: Berries are among the most colorful fruits, full of antioxidants and fiber, and naturally sweet.
Gut tip: Look for unsweetened dairy-free yogurt that says "live and active cultures" on the label. Your gut bugs will thank you!

DIPS & FROZEN TREATS GF

DATE CARAMEL DIP WITH CRISP APPLES



FAST FIX YOUTH FRIENDLY GREAT FOR COMPANY

Caramel apples are a fall tradition, and this dip gives you all that gooey caramel flavor from just dates, nut butter and vanilla. It's ready in minutes, and it turns a plain apple into a treat everyone fights over. I love setting this out on game day or for a snack at Bible study small group.

PREP: 10 MIN + 10 MIN SOAK **SERVES: 6**

Ingredients

- 1c packed Medjool dates, pitted (about 10)
- ¼c hot water, plus more as needed
- 2T almond butter or tahini (nuts or seeds only)
- 1t pure vanilla extract
- ¼t cinnamon
- pinch of sea salt
- 1t lemon juice
- 3 crisp apples, sliced (Honeycrisp, Pink Lady or Granny Smith are nice choices)

OPTIONAL TOPPINGS

- chopped pecans, cacao nibs, a sprinkle of cinnamon

Instructions

1. Soak the dates in the hot water for 10 minutes to soften. Don't drain!
2. Add the dates and their soaking water, nut butter, vanilla, cinnamon, salt and lemon juice to a blender or food processor.
3. Blend until thick and silky, scraping down the sides. Slowly add more hot water, 1T at a time, until it's the consistency you want.
4. Spoon into a bowl, sprinkle with toppings and serve with apple slices.

MELISSA'S TIPS

Toss the apple slices in water with a squeeze of lemon to keep them from browning. Read the label on nut butters: nuts and maybe salt, that's it!

SERVING SUGGESTION

Make "caramel apple nachos": fan apple slices on a plate, drizzle with the dip and sprinkle with pecans and cacao nibs.

MAKE LIFE EASIER

Store the dip in a lidded jar in the refrigerator for up to 1 week. It firms up when cold, so stir in a splash of warm water.

HIGHLIGHT: INGREDIENTS FOR GOOD HEALTH

Dates: Dates are a whole-food sweetener: unlike sugar, they bring fiber and potassium along with their caramel-like sweetness.
Gut tip: Leave the peels on your apple slices for dipping. That's where a lot of the fiber and nutrients are!

DIPS & FROZEN TREATS GF

COOKIE DOUGH YUMMUS



FAST FIX YOUTH FRIENDLY GREAT FOR COMPANY

If you loved my Brownie Batter Yummus in Vol 1, meet its vanilla-y cousin! This creamy chickpea "cookie dough" is a perfect quick-fix snack that you might want to make every week, it's THAT good! This big batch is perfect for parties or a whole week of snacking, and it blends better in a full-size food processor. Grab some apple slices and dig in.

PREP: 12 MIN **SERVES: ABOUT 12**

Ingredients

- 2 (15oz) cans low-sodium chickpeas, drained & rinsed
- ½c raw cashews (level if pieces, heaped if whole)
- ½c 100% maple syrup
- 4t pure vanilla extract
- 6T rolled oats (certified gluten-free)
- ¼t salt
- ½c vegan chocolate chips (gluten-free)
- To serve: sliced apples, bananas, graham crackers (gluten-free)

Instructions

1. Combine all ingredients except chocolate chips in a food processor.
2. Blend until everything is smooth and combined, about 2 minutes, stopping a few times to scrape down sides.
3. Put in the chocolate chips and pulse to combine.
4. Serve immediately or chill before serving. Store yummus in a sealed container in the refrigerator.
5. Serve with sliced apples, bananas or gluten-free graham crackers.

MELISSA'S TIPS

Read the label on the chocolate chips (no milk ingredients) and look for whole-grain, low-sugar, gluten-free graham crackers if you use them. Mini chips spread further, so a little goes a long way!

SERVING SUGGESTION

Make a "dessert board": a bowl of yummus in the middle surrounded by apple and pear slices, strawberries and banana coins.

MAKE LIFE EASIER

Keep a can of chickpeas and a bag of cashews in the pantry and you're always 10 minutes away from a treat. Keeps about 4 days in the refrigerator.

HIGHLIGHT: INGREDIENTS FOR GOOD HEALTH

Chickpeas: Beans in dessert? Yes! Chickpeas add fiber and plant protein, which help keep you satisfied and nourished.
Gut tip: New to chickpeas? Start with a small scoop and drink plenty of water as your body adjusts to the fiber boost.

DIPS & FROZEN TREATS GF

MANGO LASSI ICE POPS



YOUTH FRIENDLY FAST FIX

A mango lassi is a creamy, cardamom-scented yogurt drink from India, and it makes the dreamiest ice pop! Ripe mango, plant yogurt and a squeeze of lime are all you need. Kids love them, grown-ups love them, and they're a cool, refreshing treat on a hot afternoon.

PREP: 15 MIN FREEZE: 6 HRS MAKES: 6 POPS

Ingredients

- 2c ripe mango chunks (fresh, or frozen & thawed)
- 1c unsweetened plain dairy-free yogurt (soy has the most protein)
- ½c unsweetened plant milk
- 2T pure maple syrup, or 2 Medjool dates (optional, only if your mango isn't very sweet)
- ¼t ground cardamom
- 2t fresh lime juice
- tiny pinch of sea salt

Instructions

1. Add all ingredients to a blender and blend until completely smooth.
2. Taste and add a little sweetener only if needed. (Remember, flavors taste less sweet once frozen.)
3. Pour into 6 ice pop molds, leaving a little room at the top. Insert sticks.
4. Freeze until solid, at least 6 hours or overnight.
5. To release, run the molds under warm water for 10–20 seconds and gently pull.

MELISSA'S TIPS

Read the yogurt label: choose plain and unsweetened, with live cultures if you can find it. Flavored yogurts can have lots of added sugar.

SERVING SUGGESTION

Dip the tips in a little melted dark chocolate and chopped pistachios for a party-ready pop.

MAKE LIFE EASIER

No molds? Pour into small paper cups, cover with foil, poke a stick through and freeze.

HIGHLIGHT: INGREDIENTS FOR GOOD HEALTH

Mango: Sweet, juicy mango is full of vitamin C and beta-carotene. Paired with yogurt, it makes a creamy, satisfying frozen treat.
Gut tip: Choose a plain plant yogurt labeled "live and active cultures" for a cool treat with cultures your gut bugs love.

COACHING TOOLS

SWEETENER SWAP CHART

Not all sweeteners are created equal. Whole-food sweeteners like dates and fruit bring fiber along with their sweetness. Syrups and sugars still count as **added sugar**, even when they're natural, so use them wisely.

SWEETENER	BEST IN	HOW IT WORKS
Medjool dates & date paste	Brownies, crusts, caramel, puddings	Whole fruit with fiber. Adds chewy, caramel-like richness.
Ripe banana	Cakes, chia layers, puddings	Adds moisture and sweetness; can brown light-colored puddings.
Unsweetened applesauce	Snack cakes, cookies	Replaces oil and some sweetener; makes a tender crumb.
Pure maple syrup	Cookies, puddings, frostings	A little goes a long way. Choose 100% pure, not "pancake syrup."
Agave syrup	Chia & tofu puddings	Neutral flavor, dissolves easily. Still an added sugar; use sparingly.
Coconut sugar	Brownies, baked goods	Swaps 1:1 for brown sugar. It's still an added sugar.
Blackstrap molasses	Gingerbread	Deep, bold flavor; use in small amounts.

DAILY ADDED-SUGAR GUIDE

Most Americans get far more than what's recommended as a daily added sugar guide. Aim for having less than **6 teaspoons (25 grams)*** of added sugar a day for women and less than **9 teaspoons (36 grams)*** for men. A serving of most recipes in this book fits comfortably, and many have very little added sugar at all.

*American Heart Association

COACHING TOOLS

READ THE LABEL

You'll see "read the label" all through this book, and for good reason! The front of the package is marketing. The ingredient list on the back tells the truth. Consider taking this checklist to the store.

- [ ] **Nut & seed butters**
  Nuts or seeds, maybe salt – that's OK. Don't buy butters with added oils, sugar or "fillers."
- [ ] **Chocolate chips & bars**
  Cacao listed first, no milk ingredients, 70% cacao or higher when you can.
- [ ] **Syrups**
  "100% pure maple syrup." Skip "pancake" or "table" syrups with corn syrup.
- [ ] **Plant milks & yogurts**
  "Unsweetened" and "plain" are healthiest – you can add your own flavorings at home. Look for short ingredient lists.
- [ ] **Canned fruit & pumpkin**
  Packed in its own juice or water, not syrup; 100% pure pumpkin, not pie filling.
- [ ] **Dried fruit**
  The fruit only, with no added sugar or oil when possible.
- [ ] **Coconut milk**
  Coconut and water, without added sugar or gums if you can find it.
- [ ] **Canned beans**
  Low-sodium or no-salt-added. Drain and rinse before using.
- [ ] **Graham crackers & dippers**
  Labeled gluten-free, whole grain, low in added sugar.

3 QUICK LABEL RULES

1. Ingredients are listed from most to least. **2.** Fewer ingredients, and ones you can pronounce, are usually better.
3. Sugar hides under many names: cane juice, corn syrup, dextrose, rice syrup and more.

COACHING TOOLS

PROTEIN & FIBER BOOSTERS

Adding protein and fiber to a treat helps it feel more satisfying, so a small portion really hits the spot. Here's where these boosters already show up in the book, and how to add them to your own favorites.

BOOSTER	WHERE IT FITS	WHY I LOVE IT
Chia seeds	Puddings, parfaits, granola	Fiber, plant omega-3s; thickens as it sits.
Ground flax seeds	Brownies, cakes, cookies, puddings, breads	Fiber and omega-3s; works as an egg replacer.
Hemp seeds	Sprinkle on puddings, bark, pops	Plant protein with a soft, nutty crunch.
Rolled oats & oat flour	Cakes, cookies, crusts.	Whole grain with soluble fiber.
Beans & chickpeas	Brownies, yummus	Fiber and plant protein, hidden in plain sight!
Tofu	puddings	A complete plant protein that blends silky smooth.
Nuts & nut butters	Crusts, cookies, dips, pudding	Healthy fats and protein that help keep you satisfied.
Plant protein powder	Chia pudding	Optional. Use a clean gluten-free plant protein powder.

MELISSA'S TIPS

Try the "sprinkle rule": add 1T of chia, ground flax or hemp seeds to any pudding, parfait or fruit bowl. It's an easy nutrient upgrade!

COACHING TOOLS

YOUR CRAVING COACH

Sugar cravings are normal, and they don't mean you've failed. They're information! Next time a craving shows up, give yourself grace and walk through these steps.

PAUSE & BREATHE
Take three slow breaths. Ask: am I hungry, thirsty, tired, stressed or bored?

HYDRATE
Drink a glass of water or herbal tea and wait 10 minutes. Sometimes thirst wears a sweet disguise.

CHOOSE ON PURPOSE
If you still want something sweet, pick a whole-food treat from this book and serve your portion on a plate or bowl to make it an intentional choice.

SAVOR IT
Sit down, slow down and enjoy every bite. This is part of a healthy life.

TRY THIS: NAME WHAT'S ON YOUR PLATE

Before eating your next dessert, name the whole foods and the sweetener in it. For example: "Black beans, cacao, flax and almond butter, sweetened with coconut sugar." Noticing helps you choose treats that love you back and informs future decisions which helps you make future choices with confidence.

COACHING TOOLS

WEEKLY TREAT TRACKER

Planning your treats puts you in the driver's seat. Jot down your planned treat, notice how you feel before and after. Then jot down a fiber-rich ingredient each time you "find the fiber" in your treat. Doing this exercise helps connect the dots between what you eat and how you feel, and makes future decision-making easier.

DAY	PLANNED TREAT	MOOD / ENERGY BEFORE	MOOD / ENERGY AFTER	FIND THE FIBER
Mon				○ ○ ○
Tue				○ ○ ○
Wed				○ ○ ○
Thu				○ ○ ○
Fri				○ ○ ○
Sat				○ ○ ○
Sun				○ ○ ○

THIS WEEK'S WIN

NEXT BEST STEP

COACHING TOOLS

RECIPE INDEX & GROCERY LIST

GREAT FOR COMPANY

11 Tropical Dreams Pudding
12 Banana Crunch Chia Parfait
13 Strawberry Shortcake Parfaits
14 Fiber-Rich Black Bean Brownies
15 Sweet Potato Brownies
16 Dark Chocolate Fruit & Nut Bark
17 Gingerbread Cookies
18 Lemon Lavender Almond Cookies
19 Coconut Macaroons
21 Carrot Cake Snack Cake
22 Mini Lemon Cashew "Cheesecakes"
23 No-Bake Pumpkin Pie Minis
24 Fresh Berry Tart
25 Date Caramel Dip with Crisp Apples
26 Cookie Dough Yummus

YOUTH FRIENDLY

8 Nutrient-Dense Chocolate Chia Pudding
9 Fall Mocha Latte Chia Pudding
10 Chocolate Protein Pudding
11 Tropical Dreams Pudding
12 Banana Crunch Chia Parfait
13 Strawberry Shortcake Parfaits
14 Fiber-Rich Black Bean Brownies
15 Sweet Potato Brownies
17 Gingerbread Cookies
20 Sweet Potato Oatmeal Cookies
21 Carrot Cake Snack Cake
23 No-Bake Pumpkin Pie Minis
25 Date Caramel Dip with Crisp Apples
26 Cookie Dough Yummus
27 Mango Lassi Ice Pops

FAST FIX

8 Nutrient-Dense Chocolate Chia Pudding
9 Fall Mocha Latte Chia Pudding
10 Chocolate Protein Pudding
12 Banana Crunch Chia Parfait
16 Dark Chocolate Fruit & Nut Bark
18 Lemon Lavender Almond Cookies
25 Date Caramel Dip with Crisp Apples
26 Cookie Dough Yummus
27 Mango Lassi Ice Pops

DESSERT GROCERY CHECKLIST

PRODUCE

bananas, apples, mangoes, pineapple, sweet potatoes, berries, lemons, limes, oranges, pomegranate, carrots, avocado, mint

NUTS & SEEDS

cashews, almonds, pecans, walnuts, pistachios, chia, flax, hemp & pumpkin seeds, nut butters, tahini, coconut

PANTRY

Medjool dates, pure maple syrup, agave, coconut sugar, molasses, oats & oat flour (certified gluten-free), almond flour, cacao/cocoa, dark chocolate chips (gluten-free), vanilla & almond extracts, spices, baking powder (gluten-free) & baking soda, raisins & dried cranberries, coffee, protein powder & powdered peanut butter (gluten-free), cream of tartar

CANS & CARTONS

black beans, chickpeas, pumpkin, pineapple, lite coconut milk, silken & firm tofu, plant milk, plain dairy-free yogurt

ABOUT

MEET MELISSA



Melissa Furman, NBC-HWC, is a National Board Certified Health & Wellness Coach and the founder of the Second Youth Wellness Method. She helps midlife women age well with nutrient-dense whole foods and simple lifestyle habits for a second youth with lasting health.

Melissa grew up in the kitchen cooking with her mom and aunt. When she discovered the plant-based lifestyle in 2015, she became focused on the power food has on health and well-being, and she's been creating fuss-free, delicious plant-based recipes ever since. She is also the author of the *Second Youth Wellness Cookbook*.

YOUR NEXT STEP

READY FOR MORE THAN DESSERT?

If you enjoyed these treats, imagine what's possible when every part of your plate (and your day) supports a second youth that's better than the first. The Second Youth Wellness Method gives you a simple, step-by-step path to eat well, feel energized and build habits that last, with grace and without the overwhelm.

SECONDYOUTHWELLNESS.COM/COURSE