

*MY **Bikini** Belly Presents*

DECADENT DESSERTS

For A Delicious Body



BY Judy Lamont

of URBANCOUNTRYSTYLE.COM

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Book and Jacket design by
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Jacket Photography
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WHAT YOU HIDE CONTROLS YOU.

a few words from Judy

What is it about our love of all things sweet that we will seek them out, sneak them in the house, secretly devour them in one sitting, then feel guilty about it and beat ourselves up? Yet, we will do it again and again. This has been a question that has plagued authors of diets and nutrition plans throughout the ages. How do we get people to stop sabotaging themselves?

This is also why, when Shawna first approached me about the concept for this cookbook, my immediate reaction was guilt. Yes, that's right. GUILT. I wondered, "Why would she or I want to entice you to consume decadent treats when she had spent so much time and effort weaning you off them?" I was so concerned I nearly opted out. That was until I listened to her wisdom and vision around the idea.

The wisdom went something like this: If you are told you can never have something again, that is all you will want so let's find a way to let you have it. The woman is genius I tell you! She is cut-to-the-chase solution focused, not problem-centered.

I know for myself that being told I can never have a "blah blah blah" again is a sure fire way for me to simply become fixated on "blah blah blah", so much so that it literally wakes me up at night! Throughout my fat loss journey, my cheat meals were looked forward to all week just so I could have that thing that was forbidden. But often that thing made me feel horrible! Why? Because it was loaded with foods that my body was telling me had been a problem all along: foods such as gluten, grains, processed sugar, soy, and most dairy products.

So, through trial and error I began to look for ways to have my cheats by making smart switches in some of my cherished family recipes. Even though I upped my calories with the consumption of a treat, I did it in a way that didn't hurt my body. Nor did it hurt my weight loss journey, for that matter. To this day I have kept the 35 plus pounds I lost by following Shawna's exercise regime and applying these smart switches in my diet.

In the end, I simply took this concept and applied it to a common nutrition issue that is often the biggest problem for women. Desserts. Sweets. Treats. Whatever you want to call them, this is the area where most fall down on their nutrition plan. Since I already had a few tricks up my sleeve for satisfying my own sweet cravings in a healthier way, I figured why not expand upon it and help Shawna help more people? So that's what we did and I'm excited you get to utilize these methods on your journey too.

That said, there are a few guidelines to follow for allowing these treats in your life. I follow these religiously around all my food actually, and I think you should too.

1. Plan for it. These still fall into the category of a treat and should be used as part of a healthy cheat meal, not as a license to sit and eat whenever and wherever you want.
2. Portion control. Pay attention to the serving sizes.
3. Eat without guilt! Serve it on a pretty plate and eat slowly. Elevate the experience and savour every lovely bite with all your senses. Don't deprive yourself of the pleasure associated with a food you love by sitting mindlessly in front of the TV or at your desk. Be present and fully enjoy it.
4. Try to enjoy these with family and/or friends. Eating alone is something I always try to avoid. It keeps me from over-eating and reminds me that meals are more than just food. Not to mention, this will help with portion control.
5. Remember, there will always be another day you can enjoy your favourite food. There is no such thing as "you can never have this again" on this plan.

By employing these smart switches and tips you will not only enjoy your food more, but you will do it without guilt.

COOKIES

ALMOND FLOUR CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES

YIELD 18

I believe this is the first gluten -free cookie I have ever made that resembles the texture and quality of a true chocolate chip cookie. It is soft and squidgy in the middle, yet crispy on the outside. The whole chewy experience is so satisfying.



1 cup almond butter, well stirred and at room temperature

¼ cup almond flour

¾ cup coconut palm sugar

1 tsp. baking soda

1 tsp. vanilla extract

¼ cup dark chocolate chips, 70% cacao or higher*

*use soy lecithin free chocolate chips for soy free cookies

PREHEAT OVEN to 350°F and line two cookie sheets with oven-proof parchment paper.

PLACE all ingredients except chocolate chips in a stand mixer with the paddle attachment and mix until well combined.

REMOVE mixing bowl from stand and stir in chocolate chips.

USING a large tablespoon, make even balls from the dough then set on cookie sheets about 2 inches apart. Do not flatten as this will happen in the oven.

Bake with cookie sheets staggered on two racks on each side of the oven for 12 minutes.

LET COOL on cookie sheets for 5 minutes before transferring to a rack to fully cool.

ALMOND “FLOWER” LEMON DROP COOKIES

YIELD 24

I love lemon! And I have found that I especially love it with almond flour and coconut flour, which can often come across as heavy-handed in baking. The lemon in these little morsels simply brightens them up and brings them up to snuff if you ask me.



PREHEAT OVEN to 350°F and line 2 cookie sheets with ovenproof parchment paper. Make the date syrup by covering the medjool dates with the boiling water and allowing to cool, then blend until smooth.

MIX together the avocado oil, date syrup, and the zest and juice of lemons in a medium mixing bowl. In a large mixing bowl sift the almond flour, coconut flour, baking soda, and salt and stir together then add the wet ingredients to the dry and combine. Don't overwork the dough. When combined, cover and chill for 30 minutes in the fridge.

FORM into balls about 35g each (a large tablespoon) and place on cookie sheet, flattening slightly. Decorate the tops with three almond slivers to form the flower. Bake, staggering cookie sheets on two racks in oven, for 12 minutes.

COOL on cookie sheet completely before transferring to cooling rack. If using optional powdered sugar for dusting, dust when absolutely cool.

FOR THE COOKIES:

2 ½ cups almond flour

4 tbsp coconut flour

1 tsp baking soda

¼ tsp salt

½ cup avocado oil

1 cup date syrup (see below)

zest and juice of 2 lemons

½ cup blanched slivered almonds

1-2 tbsp powdered sugar for decorating, optional*

FOR DATE SYRUP:

10 medjool dates, pitted

1 cup boiling water

*For processed sugar free, omit the powdered sugar.

YIELD: 24-30

COCONUT JOYS

2 cups medium shredded coconut

2 egg whites

¼ cup maple syrup

¼ cup semi-sweet dark chocolate chips*

*If making soy-free use soy lecithin free chocolate chips

These little mounds of joy are just the right amount of sweet to satisfy a craving. The coconut is the star of the show, but the touch of chocolate adds a hint of decadence to these delicate treats making them high tea worthy indeed.



PREHEAT oven to 350°F and line 2 cookie sheets with oven-proof parchment paper.

BEAT the egg whites until a stiff peak then add maple syrup until just combined.

FOLD in the coconut until combined, then using a small ice cream scoop, create even mounds and place on cookie sheet.

BAKE in oven for 8-10 minutes until outside is golden brown then cool on cookie sheets until completely cool.

MELT chocolate chips over a double boiler and transfer to a piping bag. Carefully pipe bands of chocolate across the cooled cookies.

WHEN chocolate has set, carefully store in air tight container.



CAKES



CHOCOLATE CHERRY CAKE BITES

YIELD: 24 BITES

Some days you just need a little bite of something sweet. To satisfy that need, what is better than chocolate and cherries? Even better? How about a cake that is rich enough that you are satisfied with just one of these little bites?



PREHEAT oven to 325°F and line an approximate 7" X 10" baking pan with parchment.

PIT the dates, soak in 1 cup hot water for 10 minutes, then add dates and water to a high speed blender and blend until the consistency of a smooth syrup.

PLACE thawed or fresh cherries in a small bowl and stir in the almond extract. Let stand until the rest of the cake is ready to assemble.

IN a medium sized mixing bowl, combine coconut flour, cocoa powder, baking powder and salt then make a well in the center.

MELT the dark chocolate over a double boiler and set aside.

IN a separate medium-sized mixing bowl, combine the date syrup, eggs, coconut milk, and avocado oil and whisk until smooth.

1 cup coconut flour, sifted
¼ cup unsweetened, Dutch processed, cocoa powder
½ tsp. baking powder

½ tsp. salt

10 fresh medjool dates

1 cup boiling water

3 eggs, beaten

½ cup coconut milk,

2/3 cup avocado oil

4 oz. dark chocolate, 70% cacao or higher*

1 cup frozen whole cherries, thawed

1 tsp. almond extract

1/3 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips*

2 Tbsp. powdered sugar, optional

*to make these soy lecithin free, use soy lecithin free chocolate

WHISK in the melted dark chocolate.

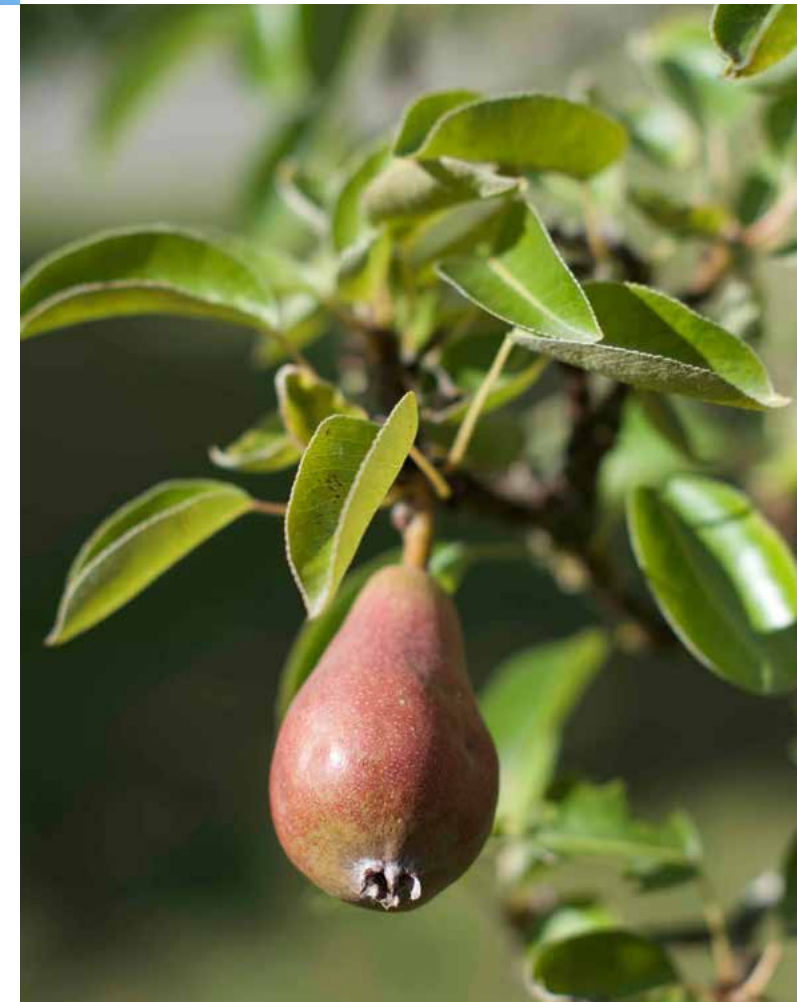
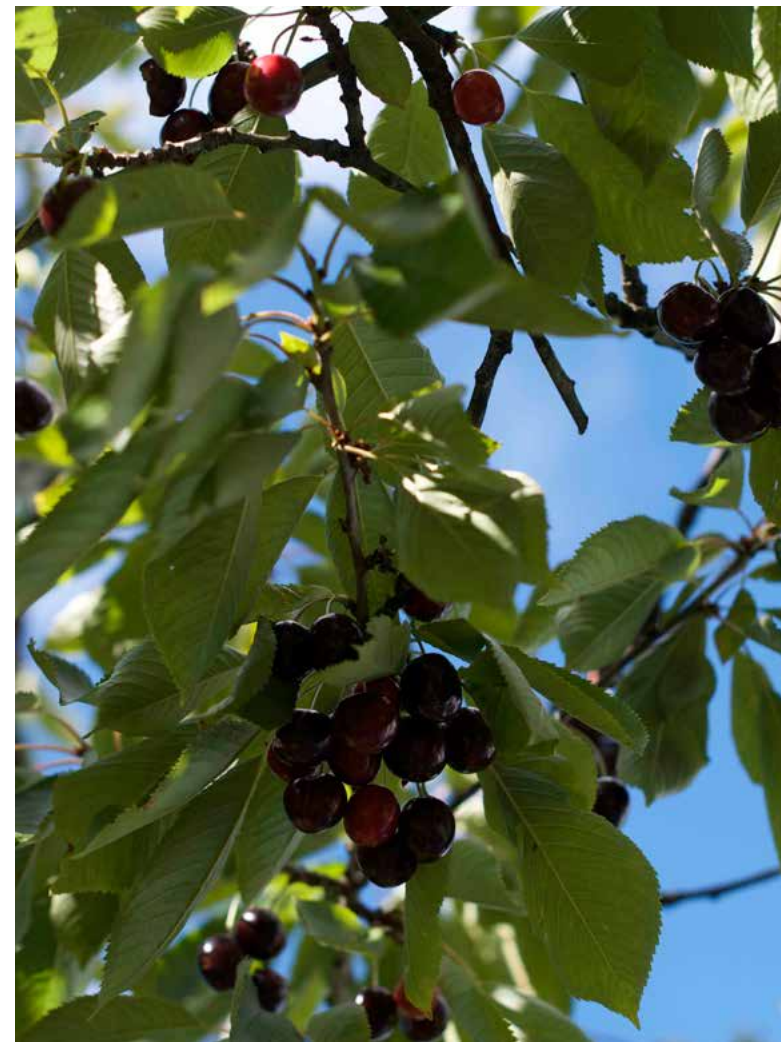
ADD the wet ingredients to the dry ingredients and stir until combined. Gently fold in the semi-sweet chocolate chips and the cherries with their juice.

POUR mixture into baking pan and smooth the top.

BAKE for 40 minutes and test with a toothpick to see if done (toothpick should come out clean). If not done, return to the oven for 5 minutes and test again. When cake is done, cool in the pan for 10 minutes then gently lift it out of the pan by the parchment paper and cool on cooling rack.

REMOVE the parchment paper from the cake, lightly trim and discard the outer edges, then cut into 3 or 4 rows along its longest side and 5 rows along the short side. When fully cooled place in an airtight container for up to 3 days.

JUST before serving sift powdered sugar over the top, but this is optional and mostly for looks or a special treat.





TRIPLE CHOCOLATE CAKE BITES

YIELD: 24 BITES

These fudgey, lovely little morsels are so rich and so delicious! Avocado oil is the surprise fat in this dessert, and it's a healthy fat at that! Coconut flour and coconut milk provide medium chain fatty acids. Who knew all this deliciousness was so healthy?



PREHEAT oven to 325°F and line an approximate 7" X 10" baking pan with parchment.

COMBINE coconut flour, cocoa powder, baking powder and salt in a medium sized mixing bowl.

MELT the dark chocolate over a double boiler and set aside.

IN a separate bowl, mash bananas then stir in maple syrup, eggs, coconut milk, avocado oil, and melted dark chocolate.

STIR the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients until just combined then fold in the dark chocolate chips and walnuts. Pour into baking pan and smooth the top as evenly as possible.

BAKE for 40 minutes, then test for doneness by inserting a toothpick in the middle of the cake and having it come out clean. If not cooked, place back in the oven for 5 minutes and test again.

- 1 cup coconut flour, sifted
- ¼ cup unsweetened, Dutch processed, cocoa powder
- ½ tsp. gluten free baking powder
- ½ tsp. salt
- 2 bananas, mashed
- ¼ cup organic maple syrup
- 2/3 cup avocado oil
- 3 eggs, beaten
- ¼ cup coconut milk, carrageenan free
- 4 oz. dark chocolate, 70% cacao or higher*
- 1/3 cup dark chocolate chips*
- ½ cup walnuts, chopped
- ¼ cup semi sweet chocolate chips*
- 1 Tbsp. coconut oil

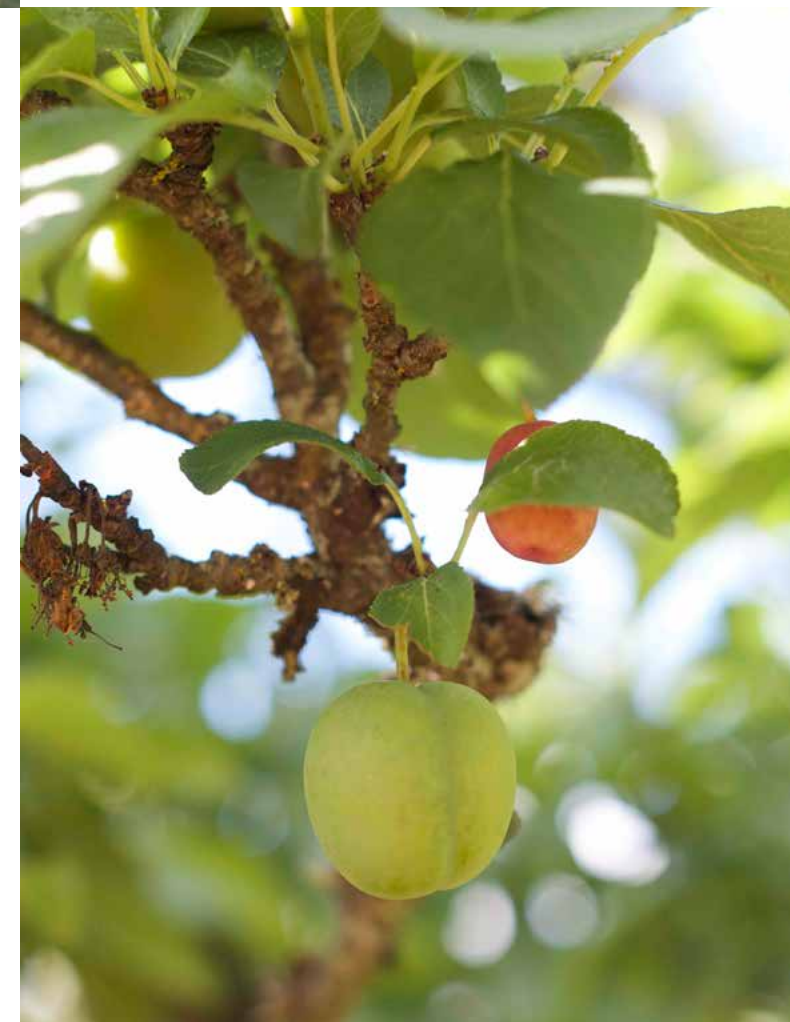
WHEN done, remove from oven and cool for 10 minutes in the pan then gently lift the cake out by the parchment paper and cool the rest of the way on a cooling rack.

WHEN the cake is cool, make the ganache by melting the semi-sweet chocolate chips with the cashew cream and coconut oil over a double boiler. Let cool for about 15 minutes then frost the top of the cake.

REMOVE the parchment paper from the cake, lightly trim and discard the outer edges, then cut into 3 or 4 rows along its longest side and 5 rows along the short side.

WHEN fully cooled place in an airtight container for up to 3 days.

***TO MAKE** these soy-free, use soy lecithin free chocolate



YIELD:
8 MINI CAKES

STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE *With CASHEW CREAM*

1 cup almond flour
1 cup ground golden flax meal
½ cup coconut palm sugar
4 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. sea salt
4 tbsp. cold grass-fed butter
4 egg whites
4 cups fresh strawberries, hulled and quartered
6 Tbsp. maple syrup
Cashew Cream, see page 31

Summer strawberries fresh from the field are a delight in June. Memories of strawberry shortcake following a session of picking pails of berries at my in-laws are strong for me, so going Paleo-ish really threw a wrench in the works...until this!



PREHEAT oven to 350° F and line a cookie sheet with oven-proof parchment paper.

IN the bowl of a food processor combine the almond meal, ground flaxseed, baking powder, coconut sugar, and sea salt. Pulse to blend. Cut cold butter into small cubes and add to the dry mix in the processor. Pulse until just combined.

BEAT egg whites in a large glass bowl until stiff peaks form. Carefully fold the dry mix into the whipped egg whites until the mix is just barely combined. Carefully spoon 8 equal portions onto the sheet into mounds. Oil your finger tips and gently shape into rounds, with flattened tops so that the biscuit is about 3/4" thick.

BAKE for 15 min. in the preheated oven then cool on cooling rack.

WHEN cool, mix berries with maple syrup and mound on a biscuit. Top with Cashew Cream (see recipe page ___).





COCONUT BANANA CAKE *With* HONEY LIME DRIZZLE

YIELD:
1 LARGE LOAF

Many of you will recognize this as Banana Bread. Make no mistake ... there is no such thing as Banana Bread. IT. IS. CAKE. As cake, it should be treated as a dessert. Luckily I have cleaned this one up for you to help you keep your delicious body!



PREHEAT oven to 350°F and line a bread pan with parchment.

IN a large mixing bowl, mix almond flour, coconut flour, coconut, coconut sugar, baking powder and salt. In another large bowl, mash banana and mix in egg yolks, vanilla, Greek yogurt, avocado oil, and almond milk.

COMBINE the wet and dry ingredients and mix evenly, then beat egg whites until stiff and fold into the mixture. Pour into the bread pan.

BAKE for 45 min. – 1 hr. depending on oven.

COOL in tin for 15 min. then remove using parchment paper and cool on cooling rack.

MIX the juice and zest of lime with the honey and serve on the side for a small drizzle on each piece.

2 cups almond flour

¼ cup coconut flour

½ cup shredded coconut,
unsweetened

½ cup coconut palm sugar

1 tsp. baking powder

½ tsp. salt

3-4 large ripe bananas,
mashed

4 eggs, separated

1 tsp. vanilla extract

¼ cup Greek yogurt

¼ cup avocado oil

3 Tbsp. almond milk

2 Tbsp. fancy coconut
flakes, unsweetened

Juice and Zest of ½ a lime

3 Tbsp. honey

“ICE CREAM”

THREE INGREDIENT VANILLA “ICE CREAM”

YIELD:
6-8 SERVINGS

My MR is extremely lactose intollerant, so when I discovered that I could make ice cream from coconut milk, minus all the dairy ... well let's just say my mind was blown. The possibilities with this base recipe are endless.

1 can full fat organic coconut milk

8 fresh medjool dates, pitted

½ cup boiling water

seeds from 1 vanilla bean, or 1 tsp. vanilla extract



SOAK dates in ½ cup boiling water for 10 minutes then drain.

SPLIT the vanilla bean down the middle and scrape the seeds from the inside and set aside. (Keep the pod for flavouring coconut palm sugar, if so desired).

PLACE all ingredients in a high-speed blender and blend until smooth and combined. Pour ingredients into an ice cream maker and follow the manufacturers instructions to complete.

IF you do not have an ice cream maker you can pour the ice cream starter into an air-tight container and place it in the freezer. Stir the mixture every hour for 6-8 hours until it is the desired consistency. Note: it will not be a smooth this way but all the flavour will still be there.

TO SERVE, top with fresh whole berries.

YIELD:
6-8 SERVINGS

BALSAMIC-ROASTED STRAWBERRY ICECREAM

FOR THE BALSAMIC ROASTED STRAWBERRIES:

2 cups quartered medium/large fresh strawberries
2 Tbsp. white balsamic vinegar
2 Tbsp. maple syrup

FOR THE ICECREAM:

1 can full fat organic coconut milk

8 fresh medjool dates, pitted

½ cup boiling water

1 vanilla bean, or 1 tsp. vanilla extract

When I was developing this cookbook, strawberries were just coming into season here in beautiful BC. I have long had a love affair with strawberries, so the day I discovered balsamic roasting them I DIED.



PREHEAT oven to 350°F and line an approximate 7" X 10" baking dish with ovenproof parchment paper. Add the strawberries, balsamic vinegar, and maple syrup to the baking dish and stir together. Bake for 20 minutes and remove from oven to cool.

REMOVE pits from dates and soak in ½ cup boiling water for 10 minutes then drain. Split the vanilla bean down the middle and scrape the seeds from the inside and set aside. (Keep the pod for flavouring coconut palm sugar, if so desired).

PLACE all ingredients in a high-speed blender and blend until smooth and combined. Pour ingredients into an ice cream maker and follow the manufacturers instructions to complete.

IF you do not have an ice cream maker you can pour the ice cream starter into an air-tight container and place it in the freezer. Stir the mixture every hour for



PUDDINGS

COCONUT CHIA PUDDING WITH FRESH BERRIES

YIELD: 2-4
SERVINGS

Have you ever wanted pudding for breakfast? Well this little treat right here is also a great breakfast go-to before a workout. The texture is creamy and rich, and the guilt factor is none. Or, why not eat it for dessert!

1 cup 0% plain Greek yogurt

¼ cup full fat, canned coconut milk

3 tbsp. maple syrup

¼ cup chia seeds

1 cup fresh berries of your choice



COMBINE the Greek yogurt, coconut milk, and maple syrup and stir until well mixed.

STIR in the chia seeds and divide between 2 – 4 dessert glasses, cover and chill for 4-6 hours.

TOP with ¼ to ½ cup berries, depending on serving size and serve chilled.

PLAN on 4 servings if this is a dessert after a full meal or 2 servings if this is a snack or for breakfast.



FRESH BERRIES WITH CASHEW CREAM

YIELD:
4 SERVINGS

The first time I heard Cashew “Cream” I was skeptical. How could something made of nuts and water taste like cream? Well you would be surprised! This is now one of my go-to desserts when fresh berries are in season.

1 cup raw cashews, do not use roasted

1/2 cup cold, filtered water

4 medjool dates, pitted

1/2 tsp. vanilla extract, or seeds of 1/2 a vanilla bean

a sprinkle of cinnamon, optional

2-3 cups fresh berries of your choice



PLACE the cashews in one bowl and the pitted dates in another.

BOIL a kettle of water and pour over the cashews, allowing them to soak for 1-2 hours until they are cool then drain them. Similarly, cover the dates with boiling water, leave to cool, then drain.

ADD the nuts, filtered water, medjool dates, and cinnamon (if using) to a powerful blender and blend until smooth and creamy.

TO serve divide the berries between 4 dishes and top each with 1/4 of the cashew cream.

YIELD:
4 SERVINGS

CHERRY CHEESECAKE PUDDING

2 cups cashews, raw

½ cup fresh squeezed
lemon juice

1/3 cup coconut oil

8 medjool dates, pitted

1 tsp. vanilla extract, or
seeds of 1 vanilla bean

1 Tbsp. maple
syrup

30 fresh cherries, pitted
and halved

It is extremely difficult to believe that this dish is entirely dairy-free. The cashew cream mixture remarkably resembles cream cheese, with its slight tang. You can also make this with practically any berry you like.



PLACE cashew nuts and medjool dates in two separate bowls. Boil a kettle and cover each with boiling water. Allow the nuts and dates to soak for about one to two hours then drain and add to a high-powered blender.

ADD remaining ingredients, except cherries, to the blender and blend until smooth.

REMOVE 2/3 of the cashew mixture from the blender and divide it between 4 serving dishes then set in fridge for 15 minutes.

WHILE the 1st mixture is chilling, add ½ the cherries to the blender and blend into the cashew mixture remaining in it. Remove 1st mixture from fridge and evenly top with the cherry cashew mixture. Cover and place in fridge for 3 hours or overnight.

TO serve, decorate the top with remaining cherries.



FRUIT



POUDRE DOUCE SPICED BAKED PEAR

YIELD:
2 SERVINGS

Poudre Douce is a medieval spice blend that was commonly referred to as *sweet powder*. Made up of cardamom, cinnamon, cloves, and ginger, this mix adds more complexity to this dish than traditional cinnamon alone would.



FOR THE SPICE BLEND:

1 ½ tsp. black pepper-corns

1 Tbsp. cinnamon

½ tsp. ground ginger

1 ½ tbsp. coconut palm sugar

1 pinch ground cloves

FOR THE BAKED PEARS:

1 pear, preferably d’Anjou pears

2 medjool dates, pitted and chopped

¼ cup chopped walnuts

½ tsp. poudre douce spice blend

1 Tbsp. maple syrup, plus 1 Tbsp. extra for serving

PREHEAT oven to 350°F.

CUT pear in half lengthwise and carefully core. Turn over and remove a small slice from the outer side in order for it to lay flat while baking. Place both halves in a small parchment lined baking tray.

MIX the dates, walnuts, spice blend, and maple syrup and carefully fill the pears.

PLACE in oven for 25-35 minutes, depending on the ripeness of the pears. You want them soft enough to easily cut, but not so soft that they fall apart.

TO SERVE, drizzle a small amount of maple syrup over each pear and top with one scoop of vanilla ice cream (page 25) or cashew cream (page 31).



ORANGE-ROASTED GRAPES

YIELD:
4-6 SERVINGS

Whenever I find myself with an excess of produce or fruit, I usually end up roasting it. I love that the flavours of almost everything that is roasted seem to heighten, and these grapes are no exception.

1 large bunch of seedless red grapes

1 tbsp. orange-infused olive oil (you can usually buy this in the olive oil section of your local grocer)



Zest of 1 orange (use a large zesting tool, not the fine one or the orange peel will burn)

1-2 tsp. cinnamon

PREHEAT oven to 350F and line a sheet tray with parchment paper.

TOSS the grapes, orange-infused olive oil, orange zest, and cinnamon in a medium mixing bowl until well combined. Pour the grape mix onto parchment-lined tray.

ROAST in oven for 20-25 minutes until they just begin to split then remove from oven to cool. These can be served as soon as cool, or stored in the fridge for up to 3 days.

SERVING options include topping about 1 cup roasted grapes with Cashew Cream (page 31) or adding them on top of Coconut Chia Pudding (page 29). These are also fabulous on Greek Yogurt in the morning.

YIELD:
6 SERVINGS

FOR THE FILLING:
8 fresh peaches

1 – 128 ml or ½ cup
container of pureed
peach organic baby
food

¼ cup coconut palm
sugar

½ tsp. cardamom

½ tsp. ground ginger

**FOR THE CRUMBLE
TOPPING:**

¾ cup almond flour

¼ cup coconut palm
sugar

¾ tsp. cardamom

½ tsp. ground ginger

1 tsp. cinnamon

¼ tsp. salt

2 Tbsp. grass-fed but-
ter, room temperature

1½ cups slivered
almonds

PEACH ALMOND CRISP

Is there anything quite as comforting as a warm peach crisp on a cool August evening. You know, on those days when fall creeps into the air as the sun starts to sit low? This is the perfect end-of-summer meets fall treat.



PREHEAT oven to 400°F Line a baking pan approximately 8” X 10” with parchment paper.

LIGHTLY rub the skin of each peach with damp paper towel to remove the peach fuzz but leave the skin intact. Pit and section into 8 pieces each. Reserve 8 peach sections and set aside.

IN your baking dish, combine the remaining peaches with the baby food puree, coconut palm sugar and spices. To make the topping, combine all topping ingredients except butter and almonds and mix well. Rub the butter into the dry mix to create a crumble then sprinkle evenly over the top of the peaches in the baking dish. Top all with the slivered almonds, trim excess parchment from edges of pan, and bake on the middle rack of the oven for 35 minutes.

REMOVE from oven and allow to cool for 15 minutes before serving. Just before serving add a fresh peach to the top of each dish.



PIE



PUMPKIN PIE “CHEESECAKE”

YIELD:
8 SERVINGS

My MR’s love of pumpkin pie is a legend around these parts. At least it was until we discovered his intolerance for gluten and dairy. Thankfully Cashew “Cream Cheese” saved the day! He can now enjoy it anytime he likes.



COVER the raw cashews with boiling water and allow to soak for at least an hour. Also cover the dates with boiling water to soften for a few minutes then drain.

PREHEAT oven to 350°F and grease a pie pan with the solid coconut oil. Add all crust ingredients to a food processor and process until well combined. To form the crust, pour into pie pan and press into its bottom and side. Cover loosely with foil and bake for 15 minutes then remove from oven and set aside to cool.

DRAIN the cashews and add them and the lemon juice to a powerful blender and blend until smooth. Add all remaining cheesecake ingredients to the blender and blend until well combined.

POUR cheesecake filling into cooled crust and refrigerate at least 2 hours, or for best texture allow it to sit in there overnight. Serve with optional coconut cream (page 46).

FOR THE CRUST:

- 1 cup pecans
- 8 medjool dates, pitted
- ½ cup shredded coconut
- ½ tsp ground ginger
- 1 tbsp. raw honey, melted
- pinch of salt

FOR THE FILLING

- 2 cups raw cashews
- ¼ cup fresh lemon juice
- 6 Tbsp. coconut oil, melted, plus extra solid oil for greasing the pie pan
- ½ cup maple syrup
- 1 cup pumpkin puree
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 tsp. pumpkin pie spice

YIELD:
10 TURTLES

DARK CHOCOLATE “TURTLES”

1 – 100 gram bar of dark chocolate (such as Lindt), 70% cacao or higher*

20 pecan halves

10 fresh medjool dates, no sugar added

a pinch of fleur de sel, optional

*to make these soy free use soy lecithin free chocolate

Dark chocolate, dates, and pecans are a marriage made in heaven. The dates lend a caramel taste without all the sugar required to make a caramel, and the pinch of fleur de sel evens out the sweetness to provide umami.

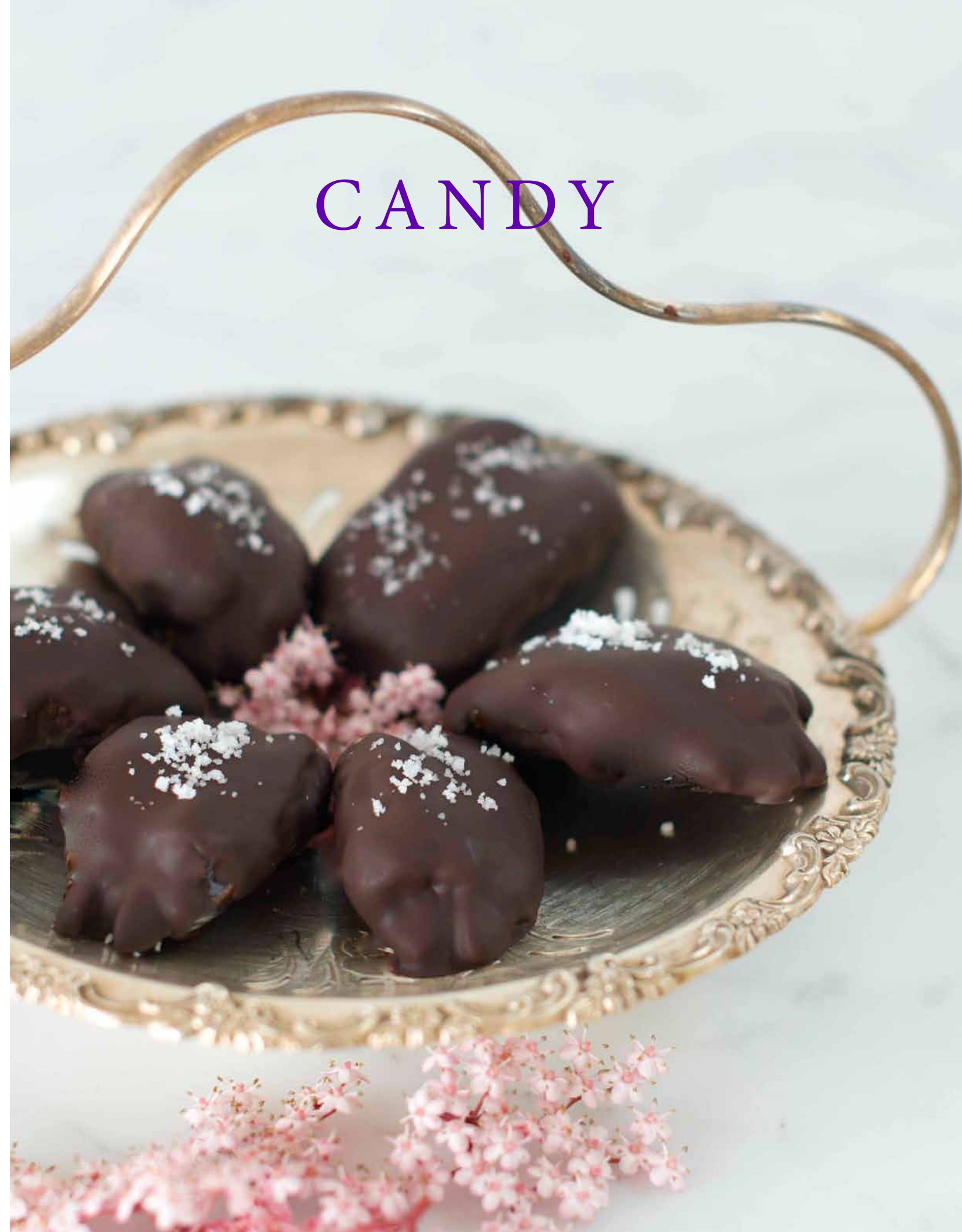


LINE a cookie sheet with parchment paper. Using a sharp paring knife, make a slit down each date lengthwise and carefully open it out flat. Remove the pit but keep the date in one piece. In the center of the date, place one pecan half with its notched “feet” sticking out of the top and one with them sticking out of the bottom. Carefully fold the date over the pecans and lightly press to seal the date again.

MELT the chocolate over a double boiler then allow to cool slightly. Using a pastry brush, brush a little chocolate over the seam of the date then set it seam-side down on the cookie sheet.

LIGHTLY spoon chocolate over top of each date. Don’t worry if it spreads a little, but try not to give up too much chocolate to the tray so you are sure to have enough for each turtle. Allow to cool for about 10 minutes, then carefully move the turtles out of their chocolate puddles and set them on a clean spot on the cookie sheet. Top with a tiny pinch of fleur de sel.

CANDY





DARK CHOCOLATE BARK *with* BENEFITS

YIELD:
10 SERVINGS

Between the flavanoids in dark chocolate, the anti-inflammatory and digestive aid properties of ginger, magnesium in pepitas, and anthocyanin antioxidants in cherries, well this little treat is just packed with benefits.



1 – 100g bar of dark chocolate (such as Lindt), 70% cacao or higher*

2 tbsp. pepitas

2 medallions crystallized ginger, finely diced

2 unsulphered dried apricots, finely diced

3-4 unsulphered dried bing cherries, finely diced

2 tbsp. unsulphered dried cranberries

*to make these soy free use soy lecithin free chocolate

LINE a baking sheet with parchment and draw a rough rectangle about twice the size of the original chocolate bar, then turn over the paper so you don't pour chocolate onto your pencil marks.

BREAK up the chocolate a little then melt it in the bowl nestled over the hot water. Stir constantly as this makes the chocolate glossier.

POUR melted chocolate onto the parchment, trying to keep it within the rectangle you drew (this will allow you to cut it evenly, thus count the calories with some accuracy).

WHILE the chocolate is still warm, starting with the pepitas evenly distribute the "toppings" then pop it into the fridge to cool for a couple of hours. When thoroughly cool, cut into 10 equal portions.

YEILD:
4 SERVINGS

PUMPKIN-SPICED COCONUT LATTE

1 – 14 oz. can full fat
coconut milk

1 cup warm water

¼ cup pumpkin puree

4 medjool dates, no
sugar added

1 tsp vanilla and ¼ tsp
vanilla, divided

1 ½ tsp. pumpkin spice
mix

pinch of cinnamon

Pumpkin-spiced lattes are a fall tradition that carries through from October until after Thanksgiving. Coconut milk and its cream make these rich and special without the addition of dairy. Dates add natural sweetness.



TO make the coconut cream, open the can of coconut milk and remove about half the coconut cream from the top of the can and set aside. Pour remaining coconut water and cream from the can into a powerful blender.

ADD water, pumpkin puree, dates, and 1 tsp. vanilla to the blender and blend on high until smooth and frothy.

POUR blender contents into a pot and heat until just before boiling point.

WHILE lattes are heating, Using a small whisk whip the reserved coconut cream and add the ¼ tsp. vanilla extract.

DIVIDE lattes among 4 small mugs and top with coconut cream with a pinch of cinnamon on top.

DRINKS



YIELD:
1 SERVING

EASY MEXICAN HOT CHOCOLATE

2 squares premium dark chocolate with chili added, such as Lindt Excellence Chili Piment Rouge

1 cup nut milk of choice

1 tsp. maple syrup, optional

Mexican hot chocolate is known for its ability to warm you through on a cold winter's day. This is due to the ability of its chili peppers effect on thermogenesis, and the good news is that this "heat" requires energy to produce. That's right, it takes calories to heat you up! The consumption of chili peppers has been shown to increase thermogenesis and oxygen consumption. So drink up to feel the heat and hear your fat cells screaming.



BREAK chocolate squares into chunks and add to bottom of mug.

HEAT nut milk on stove top until just before boiling then pour over chocolate in mug.

STIR and add maple syrup to taste if you require. Try it first because it is actually quite sweet without it.





ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Judy Lamont is the Publisher and Editor-in-chief at
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