

Recipes **From the Blue Zones® Kitchen**

Plant-Slant Banana Bread

From Blue Zones

- Ingredients:**
- 2 cups whole wheat pastry flour
 - 1 tsp baking soda
 - ½ tsp baking powder
 - ½ tsp salt
 - ½ tsp cinnamon
 - ½ tsp apple cider vinegar
 - ½ cup soy milk (or other plant-based milk)
 - ½ cup coconut sugar or organic cane sugar
 - ½ cup unsweetened applesauce
 - 1¼ cups mashed bananas (3-4 ripe bananas)
 - 1 tsp pure vanilla extract
 - ½ cup chopped walnuts
 - ½ cup dark chocolate chips, optional

- Directions:**
- Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Prepare a standard size loaf pan by lining it with parchment paper. You can also use 4 mini loaf pans. Very lightly rub cooking spray on them with a paper towel.
 - Pour the soy or plant-based milk into a bowl and add the apple cider vinegar. Set aside.
 - In a large bowl, mix together the flour, baking soda, baking powder, salt and cinnamon. Whisk to combine dry ingredients.
 - In the bowl with the soy milk, add the applesauce, sugar, mashed banana and vanilla extract. Mix well. Add the wet ingredients to the dry ingredients and stir with a rubber spatula until just mixed. Don't overmix. Fold in the walnuts and dark chocolate, if using. Pour the batter into the prepared pan(s). Sprinkle with extra chopped walnuts.
 - Bake at 350 degrees for 35-40 minutes for the standard size pan, or 25-30 minutes for the mini loaf pans, or until a toothpick comes out clean when inserted in the middle. Cool on a wire rack and remove from pan after 15 minutes.

This fresh baked banana bread is sure to bring a dose of holiday joy to your season. Whole wheat pastry flour offers a heartier dose of fiber than white flour, and fiber is helpful to maintain proper digestion and cardiovascular health. Baking with whole wheat flour will add a denser texture overall, but the taste of the product won't be compromised. This bread offers up about 4 servings of fruits in total from the bananas and apple sauce combined. Bananas are a rich source of potassium, which is helpful for blood pressure and nerve regulation. Adding walnuts gives this loaf an extra crunch, as well as heart healthy fats, fiber and plant-based protein.

Tips by by Marissa Martorana, RDN

Recipes **From the Blue Zones® Kitchen**

Fruity Chocolate Almond Bark

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- Ingredients:**
- 1 cup toasted almonds, walnuts or pecans, coarsely chopped
 - ½ cup dried cherries or chopped dried fruit, coarsely chopped
 - 6 oz dark chocolate (60%-70%, or higher), finely chopped
 - ¼ tsp cinnamon
 - ½ tsp espresso powder, optional

- Directions:**
- In a medium bowl, toss together the almonds and the dried fruit. Line a baking sheet with waxed or parchment paper.
 - Melt the chocolate in the microwave on low power or until melted, but not thick. It may take 1-2 minutes depending on the power of the microwave. Or use a double boiler to melt the chocolate. Stir in the fruit, nuts and cinnamon. Add espresso powder if desired.
 - Drop by teaspoonful for clusters, or pour onto parchment paper lined baking pan and spread evenly. Refrigerate until firm and store in airtight container in refrigerator.

These little treats are perfect for gift giving or enjoying at home with your family as part of your meal, snack or dessert. Almonds boast a heart serving of fiber, plant-based protein, magnesium, Vitamin E and calcium. Magnesium is a mineral that is helpful in regulating muscle and nerve functioning, and helps the heart beat steady. Vitamin E is a fat-soluble vitamin and acts as an antioxidant to protect cellular damage. It also acts to prevent clots from forming in the heart arteries. Calcium is helpful in maintaining strong bones and teeth. Dried fruits contain fiber and antioxidant properties and are an easy way to increase nutrient consumption in this delicious recipe. Cocoa, the component in dark chocolate, contains plant chemicals called flavanols that have been shown to possibly be protective to the heart. Flavanols have also been shown to support the production of nitric oxide, which helps to relax blood vessels and improve blood flow, which can lower blood pressure.

Tips by by Marissa Martorana, RDN

Source:

<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/food-features/almonds/>

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