

Healthy holiday recipes

Cranberry sauce and ginger cookies are two of many Christmas (or any holiday) favourites. Here are healthier versions of both, without added refined sugars.

Cranberry Sauce

Ingredients:

2c fresh or frozen cranberries
½ c chopped dates (about 10-12 dates)
½ c unsweetened applesauce
½ c unsweetened orange juice
(optional) ¼ tsp sea salt (helps to tone down tartness)

Combine all ingredients except salt in a saucepan and cook on low heat until it is thick. Frequently stir and mash the mixture with a potato masher.

Once the mixture is very soft and well mashed, shut off the heat and mix in the salt while it is cooling.

For a smoother mixture, put it in a blender after it cools and blend until smooth. If you don't have a blender, try to mash it well with the potato masher or a fork, which should be easy to do once the mixture is soft from cooking.

Store the cranberry sauce in an air-tight container in the refrigerator. Best to use up within 4 or 5 days or freeze for future use.

Gingerbread Cookies

Ingredients:

2 cups ground almond 'flour' (or use oat, spelt or another flour of your choice).
1 TB unsweetened cocoa powder
1 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice
12 dates, chopped (about ½ cup)
1 banana
1/3 cup water or milk (can use rice or almond milk, etc.).
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Preheat oven to 180 C (350 F). Soften the dates in the microwave with about a tablespoon of water. Mash them with a fork. Mash the banana and combine with the dates. Then combine them with the milk and vanilla. In another bowl, combine all the dry ingredients. You can use a combination of almond flour and another flour if you like, or use only another type of flour, but you may have to alter the amounts.

Add the blended mixture to dry mixture and combine well. Refrigerate the batter for up to 30 minutes, allowing it to set and make it easier to work with. The batter is very sticky, so you may also have to moisten and lightly dry your hands often as you shape the cookies. Form golf-ball-sized balls and place them on a baking tray lined with parchment paper. Flatten to no more than ½ inch thick. The recipe yields about 12-15 small cookies.

Bake for about 12 to 15 minutes. Cookies will be soft and slightly golden at the bottom. Leave to cool on the baking tray (they will harden more as they cool).

Enjoy these recipes. Have a happy holiday!

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