



Kids in the Kitchen Holiday Treats!

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Whether you are celebrating Christmas, Hanukkah, or another holiday tradition, treats like cookies, squares and loaves are a delightful part of the season. But more than that, they bring families together in the kitchen, and are the source of many magical holiday memories.

In our family, Christmas cookies were a big deal. I always made at least a dozen different kinds and sometimes got quite fancy with icing and decorations. Of course, we always saved the prettiest ones for Santa, and left a carrot for each of his reindeer. Now I try to recreate family favorites using healthy whole food ingredients – like the ones in the recipes that follow. You might be surprised to know that many centuries ago when the tradition of making cookies for holidays began, cookies were neither soft or tender nor sweet. How things have changed! Many of the first holiday cookies featured spices such as cinnamon, ginger, cloves, and cardamom. Gingerbread cookies have been around since the 1500s. It was not long after that cookie molds were created in various shapes, and then cookie cutters. In Germany, cookies were often used to decorate Christmas trees. I hope you enjoy trying the recipes below!

Thimble Cookies

Makes 2 dozen cookies.

These whole food plant-based cookies are reminiscent of the thimble cookies grandma used to make. They are a yummy addition to any holiday cookie tray.

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup tightly packed dates (Medjool or other soft dates, or steam to soften)

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup soft almond or other nut butter

1 teaspoon vanilla

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup almond flour

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup oat flour

1 tablespoon cornstarch

1 tablespoon ground flax

2 tablespoons plant-based milk

1 cup shredded, unsweetened coconut

Raspberry fruit spread or jam

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.
2. Line 2 baking sheets with silicone mats or parchment paper.
3. Place the dates, nut butter, vanilla, and salt in a food processor. Pulse until combined – about a minute.
4. Add the almond flour, oat flour, cornstarch, and ground flax. Pulse to form a dough.

5. Make 1-inch balls with the dough – you should get about 24 balls.
6. Place the coconut on a plate and the milk in a small bowl.
7. Dip each ball into the milk then roll in coconut. Transfer onto your cookie sheets.
8. Using your finger, thumb or a thimble, make an indentation in the center of each ball.
9. Fill each indentation with fruit spread or jam.
10. Place the cookie sheets in the oven and bake for 12-15 minutes or until slightly browned. Let the cookies set for at least 10 minutes before removing from the cookie sheet.



Double Chocolate Delights

Makes about 24 squares.

These squares are a chocolatey treat. No one would ever guess that they are free of added sugars and oils.

1 ½ cups dates (Medjool or other soft dates, or steam to soften)

½ cup soft almond or other nut butter

2 tablespoons plant-based milk

2 teaspoons vanilla

½ teaspoon salt

1 cup almond flour

3 tablespoons cocoa powder

½ cup chocolate chips or chocolate chunks

Topping

¾ cup pecans or walnuts

¾ cup shredded, unsweetened coconut

2 tablespoons maple syrup

½ of a 100 g chocolate bar (or about 2 ounces chocolate)

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.
2. Process dates, almond butter, plant-based milk, vanilla, and salt until combined.

3. Add flour and cocoa powder and pulse until a dough forms.
4. Add in chocolate chips or chunks and process just to distribute through the dough.
5. Spray an 8 by 11-inch pan. You can use a slightly larger or smaller pan, if desired, although it will affect the thickness of the squares.
6. Press the dough into the pan.
7. In a medium-sized bowl, mix the pecans, coconut, and maple syrup.
8. Sprinkle evenly over the dough.
9. Bake for 15 minutes or until top is golden brown.
10. Remove from the oven. Cool for at least 30 minutes.
11. Melt chocolate. Drizzle over squares. Let cool completely so chocolate solidifies (you can refrigerate when the squares cool sufficiently).
12. Slice squares and freeze, if desired.



Holiday Peanut Butter Cookies

Makes 24 cookies.

These peanut butter cookies are gluten free and taste a lot like traditional peanut butter cookies. They can be made festive with a little chocolate or served plain. Another option is to top them with chopped peanuts dipped in maple syrup.

1 cup unsweetened, natural peanut butter (the runnier the better)

1/3 cup maple syrup

3 tablespoons non-dairy milk

1 teaspoon vanilla

½ teaspoon salt

5 tablespoons coconut flour

1 tablespoon cornstarch

½ of a 100 g dark chocolate bar (or about 2 ounces chocolate)

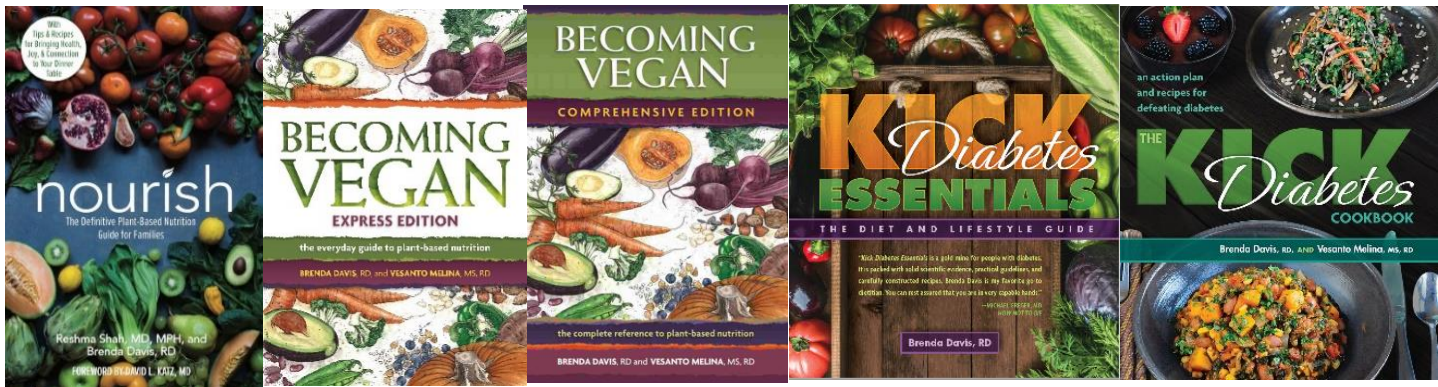
1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.
2. Line 2 cookie sheets with silicone mats or parchment paper.
3. In a medium-sized bowl, stir together the peanut butter, maple syrup, non-dairy milk, vanilla, and salt.
4. In a small bowl or measuring cup, stir the coconut flour and cornstarch together.
5. Add the flour mixture to the peanut butter mixture gradually, stirring to combine thoroughly.

6. Form the dough into 24 balls. Place 12 balls on each cookie sheet.
7. Use a fork dipped in water to flatten each cookie.
8. Bake for 12 minutes or until golden brown.
9. Cool for about 20-30 minutes.
10. Melt the chocolate in a small saucepan over very low heat – be careful not to burn it. Stir.
11. Pour the melted chocolate onto half of each cookie. Return to cookie sheet until the chocolate sets. Cookies freeze well.



This article was written for a PCRM Food for Life Instructors kids group called So Many Kids in the Kitchen. This group meets online to provide amazing cooking and nutrition demonstrations that are free to share globally. For wonderful whole food, plant-based cooking shows, tune in to their monthly broadcasts.

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Brenda Davis, RD is a plant-based pioneer and author/co-author of 13 books on plant-based diets. She is co-Author of Nourish: the definitive plant-based nutrition guide for families, Becoming Vegan: Comprehensive and Express Editions and Kick Diabetes Essentials.

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