

NOTE: Please be sure to include a link back to my blog. HTML code provided below. Thank you!

Nut Free Homemade Energy Bars

By [Jennifer Tyler Lee](http://www.52newfoods.com)

Serves 10

These nut free energy bars are great whether your kids have allergies, or they go to a school that is nut free. Packed with pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, sesame seeds, and dried fruit, these little powerhouses provide a wholesome and satisfying snack when you're on the go. These homemade energy bars are softer than some of the packaged nut-based bars you may be accustomed to. Be sure to allow them to cool completely after slicing so they can continue to firm up. If you prefer a stiffer texture, serve them straight from the refrigerator.

3 ounces Medjool dates, pitted
1/2 cup puffed millet
3/4 cup roasted unsalted pumpkin seeds, hulled
1/2 cup roasted unsalted sunflower seeds, hulled
1/4 cup toasted sesame seeds
5 ounces dried apricots (about 2/3 cup), chopped
3 tablespoons honey
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 teaspoon orange zest
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons sunflower seed butter
2 tablespoons ground flaxseed *use 1/4 cup ground flaxseed for a firmer texture

1. Preheat an oven to 300°F. Cut and fold a piece of aluminum foil to 16x8 inches. Use it to line the bottom of an 8x8-inch baking pan, leaving 2 inches of overhang on 2 opposing sides.
2. Place pitted dates in a medium bowl. Cover the dates with 2 cups of hot water. Set aside until the dates are softened, 10 minutes. Drain the dates, reserving 1/4 cup of the liquid. Place the dates and reserved liquid in the food processor and process until smooth and no flecks of date remain, about 2 minutes. Set aside.
3. Spray a large bowl with nonstick cooking spray. Add the puffed millet, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, sesame seeds, and apricots and stir to combine.
3. Combine the pureed dates, honey, vanilla, orange zest, cinnamon, and salt in a small saucepan and bring to a simmer over medium-high heat. Continue cooking for 1 minute, whisking constantly. Remove from the heat and whisk in the sunflower seed butter and ground flaxseed.
4. Pour the date mixture over the dried fruit mixture and stir until evenly coated. Transfer to the prepared pan. Use an offset spatula sprayed with nonstick cooking spray to press the mixture firmly and evenly into the pan.
5. Bake until the edges are lightly browned, the center is just set, and the edges of the bars start to pull away from the sides of the pan, about 22 to 25 minutes. Set the pan on a wire rack and let cool for 30 minutes.
6. Holding the foil overhang, gently lift the bar mixture from the pan and transfer to a cutting board. Cut into 10 bars. Transfer the bars to a wire rack and let cool completely.

What Kids Can Do

Kids can measure and mix the ingredients. They can also help individually wrap the bars for storing in the freezer.

Make Ahead

The bars can be stored in a tightly sealed container in the refrigerator for up to a week. If stacking the bars, separate the layers with a sheet of plastic wrap or parchment paper to prevent sticking. They can also be individually wrapped in plastic wrap and frozen for up to a month.

Quick Tip

If you don't have puffed millet on hand, feel free to substitute no sugar added puffed rice. Just be sure to roughly chop the puffed rice pieces before using.

For more of Jennifer's easy, healthy recipes visit her blog: www.52newfoods.com