



10

CHRISTMAS

Treats

THE WHOLE FAMILY WILL LOVE





The festive season can be an indulgent time when it comes to eating. But our top ten healthy snacks will keep you and the family from piling on the pounds.

Christmas is a magical time of year. For some, it's also an excuse to totally ditch the regular diet and exercise routines. And, although it's tempting in the moment to over-indulge, it's an annual tradition your waistline (and digestive system) could probably do without!

Research shows that adults alone will eat an extra 2,410 calories a day over Christmas, with many eating a whopping 4,350-calorie roast dinner on the big day itself. Rich puddings and cakes, bottomless tins of chocolates, roasties and bubbles can see some people put on 2lbs between Christmas Eve and Boxing Day.

I want to share with you some of my favourite healthy holiday treats you and your family will love.



LOW GL CHOCOLATE & FRUIT CLUSTERS

Prep time: 25 mins
Makes 12

100g dark chocolate
(Green & Blacks or other
good quality chocolate)
15g dried cranberries
25 ready-to-eat apricots
40g pecan nuts
5 Nairns rough oatcakes
2 tsp xylitol
40g flaked almonds

METHOD:

Melt the chocolate in a glass bowl set in shallow water over a low heat. Blend all ingredients (except almonds) in a food processor until roughly chopped.

Add the blitzed mixture and the almonds to the melted chocolate and coat thoroughly.

Spoon into 10-12 cake cases and chill in fridge until set.



LOW GL CHRISTMAS CAKE

Prep time: 30 mins + 24 hours (to soak dried fruit overnight)
Serves 8-10

170g pitted prunes
115g dried apple rings
115g dried apricots
50ml Brandy or tea
1 small apple, grated
zest and juice of 1 orange
1/2 tsp cinnamon
1/2 tsp freshly grated nutmeg
1 tsp vanilla essence
170g soft butter
85g xylitol
4 medium eggs
85g ground almonds
85g rice bran (or wholemeal flour)
1 tsp gluten-free baking powder

The day before making the cake, chop the dried fruit and put in a bowl. Cover with Brandy/ tea and leave overnight, stirring occasionally. Line a 20cm deep cake tin with a double layer of greaseproof paper. Set the oven to 150°C fan/ 160°C/ Gas Mark 2. Cream the butter and xylitol, then stir in the chopped fruit, orange zest and grated apple. Add the vanilla and spices and beat the eggs in, one at a time. Don't worry if it looks a bit curdled - it'll be fine!

Stir in the ground almonds, rice bran and baking powder and mix thoroughly. Stir the juice from half the orange to start with, adding more if necessary to make a soft consistency. Pour into the cake tin and level the top. Tie a double thickness of newspaper or old Manila envelopes around the outside with string. Bake for 90mins - 2 hours until a skewer comes out of the middle clean. If the top is getting too dark, put a piece of foil over it. As soon as the tin is cool enough to touch, put a piece of foil tightly over the top and leave until completely cold (this helps soften the top of the cake).

NOTE: Because this cake has a low sugar and alcohol content it won't keep for more than a week, but it can be frozen.



HEALTHY MINCE PIES

Prep time: 25 mins
Makes 25

1 large apple, like Braeburn, Gala
75g raisins
75g golden sultanas
75g currants
65g dried, unsweetened cranberries
60g other dried fruit (sour cherries, blueberries, mango, apricots - dried but unsweetened)
Zest and juice of an orange
50g coconut palm sugar (or 2 tsp Stevia if you'd rather)
4 tbsp organic butter, cubed
1/2 tsp cinnamon
1/2 tsp ground nutmeg
1/2 tsp ground ginger
1 tbsp brandy

For the pastry

150g ground almonds
75g coconut flour
1 tbsp coconut palm sugar
1/2 tsp baking soda
1/2 tsp sea salt
zest of an orange
115g butter, frozen. Plus a little extra for greasing
1 egg, lightly whisked

MAKE THE FILLING:

Add all of the ingredients above (other than the brandy, if using) into a large saucepan over medium heat. Stir. When the butter is fully melted, turn the heat to low, cover and cook for 15 minutes, stirring often. Take the saucepan off the heat and stir through a tablespoon of brandy, and decant into sterilized glass jars. Leave to cool with the lid slightly ajar, then secure tightly and store until you're ready to use.

MAKE THE PASTRY:

Put the ground almonds and coconut flour in a bowl with the sugar, baking soda and salt. Stir in the orange zest. Grate the frozen butter into the flour and mix together with your fingers till a crumb forms. Stir in the egg and bring together with your hands to form a dough.

Divide the dough in half, wrap each in film and place in the fridge for 1 hour (or overnight). Pre heat the oven to 175°C. Grease the moulds of a muffin pan with a little butter. Remove the dough from the fridge and place between 2 sheets of baking/ greaseproof paper. Roll with a rolling pin to flatten out the dough till it is pie-crust thin.

Using a cookie cutter (or an upturned jam jar - needs to be about 8cm diameter) cut out 25 circles and lightly press into the muffin pan moulds. The pastry can be tricky to work with as there is no gluten holding it together. Be patient. If the pastry splits just push it back together with your fingers and use any pastry scraps to fix it up.

Fill up each pie mould with a heaped teaspoon of the mincemeat. Using the remainder of the dough cut out 25 stars to top each pie. Bake in the oven for 12 minutes. Leave to cool in the tins, before gently easing them out. Don't be tempted to remove from the tin when they come out of the oven. They WILL fall apart!



BANANA SANTAS

Prep time: 30 mins

Makes 8

MAKE WITH KIDS

4 bananas

Punnet of strawberries

Marshmallows (normal size and mini)

Chocolate sugar strand sprinkles

Smarties

Honey (for sticking the eyes and nose on)

Wooden kebab sticks

METHOD:

Chop the bananas in half and put a kebab stick through the centre of the banana, leaving some space on the stick to add the strawberry and marshmallows. Lay flat on a plate.

Put a marshmallow on the kebab stick at the top of the banana. Then cut the strawberries in half and put one on the top of the marshmallow like a Christmas hat.

Add a smaller marshmallow on top of the strawberry. Use the honey to stick two liquorice strips on the banana for eyes, and a Smartie for a nose.



PITA TREE BITES

By Betty Crocker

Prep time: 23 mins

Makes 32

MAKE WITH KIDS

Wholemeal pita bread, cut into triangles

Guacamole (shop-brought or homemade)

Red pepper, chopped

Pretzels

METHOD:

Cut each pita into 8 triangles. Insert pretzel stick half into the bottom of each wedge to form a tree trunk. Spread the guacamole over the triangles to make the tree colour.

Sprinkle the chopped pepper over the guacamole to form the tree decorations. Gently press into the guacamole so they don't fall off when eating. Refrigerate until ready to eat.





FRESH FRUIT CHRISTMAS TREE

by Goodtoknow.co.uk)
Prep time: 30 mins

Serves 8
Make with the kids!

Polystyrene cone approx. 19.5cm high, 7cm diameter
(from HobbyCraft or The Works)

Star-shaped cutter

Cocktail sticks

1 large apple

1 small melon

2tsp lemon juice

1 large kiwi fruit

Approx. 26 red grapes and 26 green grapes

Approx. 18 strawberries (stalks left on)

METHOD:

Use the star cutter to make shapes from the apple and melon.

Brush the apple with lemon juice to stop from browning.

Put the cone on a plate and attach cocktail sticks to it.

Then put fruit on the other end and keep adding until it's covered.





SUGAR-FREE WHITE CHRISTMAS BITES

By Milena from the Orange Pantry (iquitsugar.com)

Prep time: 30 mins

Makes 20

562ml coconut butter
281ml coconut milk
1 vanilla pod, seeds scraped
1 tbsp rice malt syrup
50g desiccated coconut
100g macadamia nuts, chopped
100g pistachios
100g frozen raspberries (keep in freezer until ready to use)

Line a 20cm square slice tin with baking paper. Melt the coconut butter in a bowl over hot water until it has completely turned to liquid. Place the coconut butter in the food processor. Add the coconut milk, vanilla, syrup and coconut until well combined. It is important to work quickly here, because you do not want the coconut butter to start solidifying.

It is easier to stir through the dry ingredients when it is still runny. Stir in the macadamia nuts and pistachios. Gently fold in the frozen raspberries. Pour mixture into the prepared tin. Place the tray in the freezer for 3-4 hours. Use the baking paper to lift the frozen cake out of the tin and slice into squares (about 20). These are best stored in the freezer.

Note: You can eat them directly from the freezer or you can place them in the fridge for 30 mins before serving to allow the raspberries to soften a little.



SUGAR-FREE SNOW SQUARES

By Jordanna Levin
Prep time: 30 mins
Serving: 16 large squares

1 tin coconut milk
150ml coconut oil
112ml rice malt syrup
400g desiccated coconut
Pinch of beetroot powder (or natural red food colouring)

METHOD:

Grease a 20cm square tin and line base and sides with greaseproof paper extending 2cm over the edge of the tin. Place coconut milk, coconut oil and rice malt syrup in a small saucepan over low heat. Stir until melted and combined well. Remove from heat and stir through desiccated coconut.

Press half the mixture into the base of prepared tin. Place in freezer to help base firm a little.

Meanwhile add beetroot powder (or natural food colouring) to remaining mixture and combine well until colour is evenly distributed. Press pink mixture into tin and place in the fridge for at least 2 hours, or until firm.

Remove from tin and trim edges. Cut into 16 large squares or 64 smaller squares.

SPICED SQUASH AND WALNUT LOAF

By Coyo

Prep time: 45 mins

Serving: 6-8 people



SPICED SQUASH AND WALNUT LOAF

By Coyo

Prep time: 45 mins

Serving: 6-8 people

170g brown rice flour	1/4 tsp baking powder	1 medium ripe avocado, pitted
1 tbsps ground almonds	1/4 tsp salt	230g butternut squash purée
1 tbsps coconut flour	1 egg	(boil a medium size squash, diced,
170g coconut sugar	60g Coyo Natural Coconut	then either mash or put in a
1 1/2 tps cinnamon	Milk Yoghurt	blender to puree. You could also
1/2 tsp nutmeg	2 tbsps maple syrup	use a tin of pureed pumpkin, often
3-4 cloves	1/2 tsp vanilla paste	found in the world foods section of
1 1/4 tps bicarbonate soda	Two handfuls of walnuts, chopped	supermarkets)
50g dark chocolate chunks (optional)		

For the frosting

60g coconut cream
60g Coyo Vanilla or Natural
Coconut Milk Yoghurt
2 tbsps maple syrup
2 tbsps coconut oil, softened
1 tsp vanilla paste
1/4 tsp cinnamon (optional)

METHOD:

Preheat the oven to 170°C/ gas mark 3, grease and line a loaf tin.

Stir together the brown rice flour, almonds, coconut flour, coconut sugar, spices, bicarbonate of soda, baking powder and salt. Blend together the eggs, yoghurt, avocado, squash purée, maple syrup and vanilla paste until smooth.

Stir the wet ingredients into the dry and mix until combined. Stir through the chopped walnuts and optional chocolate, then pour into the loaf tin, smoothing down the top and bake for an hour or until cooked through. If the cake is browning too much halfway through cooking, place some baking paper over the top and let it continue to bake. In the meantime, beat together the frosting ingredients, and then place in the fridge to thicken.

Once the loaf is cooked, leave to cool before spreading with the frosting.



RAW CHOCOLATE HAZELNUT CHEESECAKE

By Nush yoghurts
Prep time: 30 mins + 12 hr chilling time

Serves 8-10
(makes one 8-inch cheesecake)

For the base

250g ground hazelnuts
10 Medjool dates, pitted
3 tbsp cacao powder
2 tbsp raisins
1 tsp vanilla paste
Pinch salt

For the filling

250g cashews, soaked in boiling water for 30 mins and drained
120g coconut oil, melted
100g ground hazelnuts
5 tbsp maple syrup (or more, to taste)
6 tbsp cacao (or more, to taste)
1 pot Nush cashew yoghurt
70-100ml hazelnut milk
1.5 tsp vanilla paste
Pinch of salt

Blend together all the base ingredients until the mixture starts to clump together, adding more dates if needed. Press into the base of an 8-inch spring-form cake tin, then place in the freezer to firm up for 20 mins.

Make the filling by blending all ingredients together until completely smooth and creamy in a high-power blender, adding a splash more milk if needed and adjusting sweetness to taste.

Spoon filling over the set base and place back in the freezer to firm up overnight.

Remove from the cake tin 15-20 mins before serving and top with raw chocolate if desired.

Decorate with chopped nuts and berries before you take to the table.