Banana Oat Muffins

Ingredients

- 1 cup plain unsweetened organic Greek yogurt (I like Wallaby)
- 2 ripe bananas
- 2 eggs
- 2 cups rolled gluten free oats
- ¼ cup coconut sugar
- ½ tsp. black molasses
- 1½ tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. baking soda
- ½ cup organic semi-sweet dark chocolate chips

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 400F and prepare a muffin pan by spraying cavities with cooking spray or lining them with paper liners**. Set aside.
2. Add all ingredients except for chocolate chips to a blender or food processor and process on high until oats are broken down and batter is smooth and creamy. Stir in chocolate chips by hand.
3. Pour batter into prepared muffin pan, filling each cavity until it is about ¾ full. Optional: sprinkle a few chocolate chips over the top of each muffin.
4. Bake for 15-20 minutes, until the tops of your muffins are set and a toothpick inserted into the middle comes out clean. Allow muffins to cool in pan for ~ 10 minutes before removing. Store in an air-tight container for up to a week.

Notes

** If using paper liners, you'll want to spray them with cooking spray as well, since the lack of oil in these muffins could make them stick to the liners after baking.

Chocolate & Peanut Butter Chickpea Cookie Bars – Gluten Free & Vegan

The first time I made these bars I was seriously blown away by the buttery taste. These bars contain no butter, no flour, no refined sugar yet taste absolutely decadent and indulgent. Make sure you let others taste these before you reveal the secret ingredient…!

Yield: 12 squares

Ingredients

- 1 can chickpeas, rinsed & drained
- ½ cup peanut butter (I used a natural peanut butter that I ground myself at the store)
- ¾ cup maple syrup
- 2 tsp vanilla
- ¼ teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon baking soda
- ¾ cups semi-sweet or dark chocolate chips, reserve ¼ cup for the top
- pinch sea salt

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350F and line a loaf pan with parchment paper
2. In a food processor (or high speed blender), add all ingredients except chocolate chips and process until batter is smooth, similar consistency to hummus
3. Stir in 1/2 cup of the dark chocolate chips

4. Scoop the batter into the lined pan and smooth it out evenly. Lightly press the remaining chocolate chips over top
5. Bake for 60 minutes or until toothpick comes out clean. This will vary with ovens so be patient and wait until the edges are beginning to brown
6. Cool for 10 minutes in the pan then transfer to a rack for another 30 minutes for them to set. Cut into squares.

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10 Ways to Cut 100 Calories

If you think that cutting 100 calories a day doesn't sound like it will make a difference in how you look and feel, think again. Start with that one simple change in January and you'll drop 10 pounds in 2015.

It's easier than you think:

1. Swap cow's milk for almond milk

2. Swap a whole-wheat wrap for butter lettuce or collard green wraps

3. Swap potato chips for spinach chips

4. Pour only ½ a glass of wine and dilute with seltzer or sparkling water

5. Replace sour cream with hummus

6. Replace a glass of orange juice with an orange
7. Switch from whole-grain pasta to squash or zucchini spaghetti

8. Trade your morning muffin for chia seed pudding

9. Substitute homemade oil-and-vinegar-based dressings for bottled store-bought brands.

10. Use egg whites instead of the whole egg – yolks have approximately 55 calories each.

Is Sitting the New Smoking?

We've all heard the mantra, "Sitting is the new smoking." This past month, the news seemingly got more dire thanks to an article in *Scientific American* called "Killer Chairs: How Desk Jobs Ruin Your Health," by James Levine. In the story, the author discusses the shocking fact that 18 studies conducted over the past 16 years (which included 800,000 participants) suggest that chairs are lethal to your body. It makes sense, he says, if you consider that Americans spend on average 13 hours a day sitting down.

What's so bad about taking a seat? A lot. "Sitters" have a 50% higher likelihood of dying than those who stand, exercise or stay active during the day. After all, the human body was not designed to be sedentary. When you're idle, your metabolism slows, which reduces the amount of food your body converts to energy… and the result? You pack on pounds. The more weight you gain, the harder it becomes to motivate yourself to get up and keep moving. See the problem?

Don't worry, I'm not about to suggest you give up a desk job to get more exercise. That's not realistic, but there are many things you can do to keep yourself moving while you work to counteract the stress of sitting. Here are a few:

1) **Update your desk.** Workstations have gone high-tech, and they don’t have to be expensive. Look into desks with tops that raise so you can stand, or fancier options like those that come with a walk pad.

2) **Move around.** Set your alarm every hour on the hour. When it goes off, you get up and move. Take a lap around the office, follow up with co-workers face to face, or deliver messages in person.

3) **Work standing.** Make an agreement with yourself to perform certain activities standing at your desk, whether it’s talking on the phone, reading the news, catching up on trades, or following up on e-mail.

4) **Explore your building**. Whether you’re using their bathroom, their cafeteria or just breezing through, pop over to other floors in your office to maximize steps and keep legs moving.

5) **Shut your door.** Between meetings or while taking a conference call, shut your door and stand, do some crunches, touch your toes, or lift small weights. Don’t just sit there!

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10 Must-Eat Immunity Boosters

It’s easy to have a happy, stress-free holiday season when you’re living the Smart Life because you’re nourishing yourself from the inside out.

Every day, you expose your body to things that may cause infections or illness – think viruses, bacteria, mold, parasites and foreign proteins in foods. These outside agents are typically brought into your body through the mouth and nose. Your immune system is faced with the task of clearing

out these bad agents, while keeping what your body needs to stay nourished and healthy.

This means keeping your immune system strong. Because 70% of your immune system is located in your digestive tract (e.g. your “gut”), it is also critical to keep your gastrointestinal systems healthy and in balance especially during the holidays when stress is higher and so are the opportunities to abandon your diet.

Here are some foods that strengthen your immune system and keep the balance of good bacteria in your gut in check:

1. Garlic – It’s a known infection fighter, thanks to its high concentration of an antimicrobial called allicin. Crush garlic and let it sit for 10 to 15 minutes before cooking with it to activate the allicin (prep other veggies while you wait). Or, mix it with raw honey and eat on it’s own. Trust me, it’s worth the bad breath: Garlic protects you against colds, flu and possibly some cancers!

2. Leafy Greens – These antioxidant-packed and anti-inflammatory wonders protect from cancer and provide digestive support. They also bind to toxins and heavy metals in your body and flush them out so other minerals can do their job. Cook them in olive oil or coconut oil to help you absorb the fat-soluble vitamins A, E and K found in them.

3. Carotenoids – Carotenoids are fat-soluble red, orange, green and yellow pigments (beta carotene, lycopene, lutein) produced by plants, which protect against cancer, heart disease and diabetes. Examples include carrots (of course), pumpkin, sweet potatoes, butternut squash, bell peppers, all leafy greens, tomatoes and peaches.

4. Healthy Fats – You’ll find these in coconut oil, olive oil and fatty cold-water fish like salmon and mackerel. They promote the absorption of fat-soluble vitamins and keep your digestive tract working like it should.

5. Olive oil – An anti-inflammatory featuring oleic acid (omega-9 monounsaturated fatty acid) and vitamin E.

6. Coconut oil – This immunity revver boasts lauric acid, a medium chain fatty acid that converts to monolaurin in the body. Monolaurin protects you against lipid-coated viruses such as herpes, HIV and measles. Plus, staph and strep bacteria are also deactivated by lauric acid.

7. Ginger – This virus and bacteria obliterator does it all! It's an antioxidant and anti-inflammatory, plus it helps ease digestive issues. Make a quick Ginger Tea: Chop a 1-inch slice of ginger into tiny bits and steep in 1 cup of hot water. Add lemon, nutmeg and cardamom for flavor. Sip and boost immunity!

8. Seeds – Pumpkin seeds are a fantastic source of zinc, a powerhouse immunity booster. Sesame seeds also relieve constipation, aid digestion, and stimulate blood circulation. Load up!

9. Mushrooms – Mother Nature's antivirals, these little wonders are excellent disease fighters. Button mushrooms (white, cremini, portobello) are teeming with selenium (which fuels white blood cells in fighting infection) and B vitamins. Shiitake, maitake, and reishi also boast incredible anti-cancer properties.

10. Yogurt and Kefir – Both contain live active cultures that can help balance the gut bacteria, suppress harmful bacteria, and treat/prevent diarrhea. Both can be made with non-dairy ingredients for vegans.

Kale Salad with Nuts and Dried Berries

Here’s a crowd-pleasing healthy recipe that is great for potluck holiday parties.

Kale Salad with Nuts and Dried Berries

Ingredients:

- 1 bunch organic kale
- 2 bulbs endive (sliced)
- 1 cup shredded purple cabbage
- Juice of one lemon
- 3-4 TBS (approx.) extra virgin olive oil
- Sea salt to taste
- Garnish with pistachios and dried cranberries (or sliced almonds and dried cherries)

Directions:

1. Separate the kale leaves from the stems and tear the leaves into smaller, bite-sized pieces. Place the kale in a large bowl. Add lemon, olive oil and salt and massage leaves by hand until soft and resembling a “cooked” appearance. The acid and salt will help break down the fibrousness of the kale.
2. Thinly slice the endive and red cabbage and add to the bowl of kale.
3. Garnish with your favorite nuts and dried berries.

5 Smart Ways to Survive the Holidays

Sometimes the smartest tips are also the easiest ones. This is definitely the case with my holiday survival tips below. They're super simple, but will help you make big steps toward staying stress-free this season.

1. **Stay organized**. Keep your kitchen stocked with clean and healthy frozen foods, and make batches of soups and smoothies for the week.
2. **Stick to your exercise routine**. It's the best way to de-stress. Take new classes to challenge you and keep it exciting. I love Soul Cycle's new theme: Make December the new January!
3. **Pack smart party food**. Bring healthy dishes to holiday parties to guarantee you'll have something to munch on. Trust me, no one has to know it's good for them!
4. **Eat a clean breakfast.** Keep your breakfast routine consistent – say, chia seed pudding, smoothies or egg-white frittatas – so you know that at least one meal every day will be healthy and void of toxins.
5. **Keep healthy snacks on hand.** Whether in your tote, gym bag, or desk at work, stashing homemade trail mix or energy bars will prevent you from sneaking into the cupcakes and candy jars.

Warm Green Salad with Ginger

Warm salads are the perfect way to spice up an otherwise boring bowl of greens. Make extra servings of this zesty dressing to use on salmon, over Asian rice bowls or on veggie

sides.

Dressing ingredients:

½ cup olive oil
1 tablespoon fresh minced ginger
2 garlic cloves, minced
Pepper
Sea salt

Salad ingredients:

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
2 pounds greens, chopped
2 red or orange peppers, stemmed, seeded and diced
8 mushrooms of your choice, sliced
2 tablespoons toasted sesame seeds
2 tablespoons pumpkin seeds

To make the dressing:
1. Whisk the ingredients and adjust salt and pepper to your taste.

To make the salad:
1. Sauté the greens in olive oil until their “greenness” peaks.
2. Add the peppers and mushrooms.
3. Mix with the dressing and top with the seeds before serving.

Fish Baked in Parchment Paper

You can use pretty much any type of fish you want and follow these instructions. Also, I like this combination of kale and rosemary, but use any herbs (cilantro or thyme would be good) and vegetables you want or have around.

Serves 2

- 4 rosemary sprigs
- 2 5-ounce fish fillets
- 1 cup lightly massaged and shredded kale
- 8 cherry tomatoes, halved
- 2 tablespoons dry white wine or vegetable broth
- 2 tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil
- sea salt
- pepper
- 1 lemon

1. Heat oven to 450°F.
2. Cut 2 sheets of parchment paper, about 16 inches wide each. Fold each in two like a book and open up.
3. Place 2 rosemary sprigs horizontally in the middle of each parchment paper. Season the fillets with salt and pepper. Place fish (skin side down if you've got it) on top of the rosemary. Divide half of the tomatoes, kale, and any other vegetables and place each half over a fillet. Add a pinch more of salt and pepper. Pour 1 tablespoon of white wine and 1 tablespoon of olive oil over each set of fish and vegetables.
4. Seal each packet by crimping and rolling up the parchment paper like the wrapper around a hard candy. Press on the ends to make sure the packets are closed and no steam will get out. Place packets on a baking sheet.
5. Bake for 10 to 15 minutes. It'll be about 10 minutes for a 1/2-inch thick fillet and 15 minutes for a 1/-inch thick fillet.
6. To serve, use a fork to carefully open the packet and let out the hot steam. Squeeze a fresh lemon over each fillet.

Ginger Tea

For cold relief, sip some Ginger Tea.

Recipe
Grate a 1-inch piece of peeled ginger root into two cups of water. Bring to a boil then lower heat, simmer 5 minutes. Remove tea from heat and add 2 tablespoons of fresh lemon juice, raw honey to taste. Add one clove of mashed garlic (optional).

Let it cool and strain.