

Chocolate Bark

Looking for a sweet V-Day treat that won't sabotage your smart life? Try this amazing Dark Chocolate, Cherry, and Almond Bark, adapted from Laura Rosenberg at www.greennpakinnutrition.com. Be sure to use raw, organic dark chocolate to retain nutrients and avoid additives like sugar, milk, and preservatives!

Ingredients:

- 1 cup almonds
- 3 cups dark chocolate chips (70% cocoa)
- 1/2 cup dried cherries, chopped
- 1/4 teaspoon sea salt (optional)

Instructions:

1. Roast almonds in the oven at 350°F until lightly toasted, about 10 minutes.
 2. While the almonds are toasting, place chocolate chips in a large, heat-proof bowl.
 3. Place hot almonds in bowl over chocolate chips and let set 5 minutes until chocolate is melted. If necessary, place over a double boiler to melt chocolate.
 4. Stir in cherries.
 5. Spread chocolate mixture on a parchment-lined cookie sheet. Sprinkle with sea salt if desired.
 6. Place in refrigerator to cool. Break into pieces and serve.
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6 Weight-Loss Secrets from a Health Coach

In any profession, there is knowledge that you can learn through books, classes or research, and there is knowledge that you can only see through first-hand experience with clients. That's where real life meets science. In my work, I've discovered six secrets about why people become stalled in their health and weight loss goals, and how to kickstart great habits – and results – immediately.



1. You won't drink enough water unless you track it. We all know that we have to drink water. Experts have been saying this for years. The problem is that it's easier said than done, and it's the first habit people forget about when they fall off track. When my clients gain or maintain weight from week to week, the first thing I ask about is their water

intake. In nearly every case, their water intake is low. The problem is that water is key to eliminating cravings and curbing hunger. I shoot for 6 Smart Life water bottles a day (approximately 120 fl. ounces) and I make sure that I reach my goal every day by marking a dot on my hand or a piece of paper to count each one. Why? Because when I try to guess how many bottles I've had, I always overestimate the number. To keep myself sipping, I add flavor from fruit, fresh herbs or flavored Stevia drops.



2. Hunger is not a muscle we need to strengthen. Many of us think that the only way to truly lose weight is to learn to deal with hunger. The myth is that hunger cues will subside over time. They won't. The truth is that depriving yourself of food stands in the way of weight loss. When you're hungry, your body goes into stress fat storage mode and your metabolism slows down, which prevents you from dropping pounds. What I learned first-hand is that you need to journal what you eat. Using a simple pocket notebook, a diary or your

smart phone, list your meals and snacks to keep yourself honest about what you actually consume and help yourself avoid skipping meals and feeling hungry. Most of my clients don't lose weight until they try this trick.



3. Eating out stops weight loss. Period. “But it’s a healthy restaurant,” all of my clients say. Or, “it’s the same meal I would’ve made at home.” Actually, it’s not. Restaurants have hidden ingredients, larger portions and preservatives that mess up digestion and slow down weight loss. I help my clients reduce the number of times they eat out by showing them that they can make easy, healthy meals at home. On the weeks that my clients cook at home, they lose more weight and save money. When they eat out, they gain or maintain the same weight. The key to this is to pre-make ingredients that you can mix and match for simple healthy and delicious meals. Also, remember that not every meal has to be so sophisticated; it isn’t the last meal you will ever enjoy in this lifetime. Pairing some veggies with a clean protein or whole grain will work

brilliantly on most nights. Eggs are an easy protein to make last minute for any meal, and stocking up on some frozen black bean veggie burgers is also fast, easy, and good for you.



4. Choose your demon (you only get one). When people decide they are “letting go” and cheating on their eating goals, they overdo it and go for everything in a single meal – alcohol, dessert, fatty protein *and* But you don’t need to cheat all the way. Instead of thinking you’ll be either “good” or “bad” during a meal (or an entire day), choose one vice. Maybe enjoy a bit more alcohol because a friend is sharing a special bottle *or* eat the bread because this restaurant is known for its baker. Decide before you go out which “demon” will be worth the splurge and stick to it. The next day is another “smart life” day, but the next course can even be another “smart life” course. When you indulge on everything, your body won’t lose weight for a few days while it’s detoxing everything you splurged on.



5. Healthy food and snacks must be as simple as junk food.

I've learned that if you don't find ways to make your healthy snacks easily, you'll go back to the convenience of what's readily available: junk. I show my clients new products, frozen meals, snacks, and on-the-go items that are both nutritious and easy to make or eat. These aren't always fresh veggies and fruits, but they're organic, they include few ingredients, and they're so much better than processed options. Try organic veggie burgers, organic frozen vegan meals, organic frozen quinoa and brown rice, organic frozen veggies and fruit, fruit bars made from real fruit, gluten-free and organic black bean chips, quinoa chips, lentil chips or chickpeas. True, chips are still packaged snack food, so you don't want to eat them all at once, but if you need something crunchy, eat a few organic gluten-free black bean chips. The idea is to have some healthy foods on hand that are quick and easy to grab when you have cravings.



6. Your mindset can help you break any plateaus. Most of us know what's good to eat and what's not, but it's challenging to stay motivated long enough for our bodies to reach the point where we can't even tolerate bad food. Consistency is crucial. Just when you think you are plateauing is when change is about to happen. When getting healthy, most of my clients lose 6 to 8 pounds immediately, but then hit a plateau where weight no longer drops off consistently. What happens with weight loss is that your body replaces fat in cells with water first. Water weighs more than fat. It's only as water leaves the cells that you see weight loss. That's normal and it's why you're not going to lose weight every day. Accept that plateaus are natural and re-examine what's holding you back. Wait it out, stick with the plan, re-visit your weight loss tips and secrets, and your body will respond. This type of roadblock is also the time you may need a coach, or someone in your corner, who will guide you through the uncomfortable phases and keep you on track and moving toward your goals.

Easy Chicken Cacciatore

This is to satisfy a taste for Italian food with no added oil or fat. Smart Life clients and I have been making this recipe repeatedly this month and we enjoy it every time. Serve plain or with brown rice or cooked quinoa.

Ingredients

- 4 medium tomatoes, cored, seeded and diced
- 2 Tablespoons tomato paste
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 teaspoon, onion flakes
- 2 cups low-sodium organic chicken broth
- 2 teaspoons red wine vinegar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon each dried oregano, basil, and parsley.
- 1 bay leaf
- Sea salt and pepper to taste
- 2 chicken breast fillets, each cut horizontally into 2 pieces.
- 2-3 Tablespoons Red Wine (optional)

Instructions

1. In a large nonstick skillet combine all the ingredients except for the chicken. Cook, stirring often, over medium heat until the tomatoes break down and the sauce is thickened.



2. Submerge the chicken pieces in the sauce, reduce the heat to low and cook, covered, stirring occasionally, until the chicken is cooked through and the sauce is thick. Serve immediately or warm-up later on the stove.



Gluten-free Chewy Granola Bars



Makes 24 squares

Ingredients

Coconut oil cooking spray, for the baking sheet

Dry Ingredients

- 2 cups organic gluten-free oats
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup raw sliced almonds
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup raw pumpkin seeds
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup raw sunflower seeds
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup unsweetened shredded coconut
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sesame seeds
- 2 Tablespoons ground flaxseed
- 1 cup unsweetened sulfur-free dried cherries

Wet Ingredients

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup brown rice syrup
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup unsweetened almond butter
- 2 teaspoons organic vanilla extract
- 1 Tablespoon coconut oil
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon sea salt

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 350 F. Line a baking sheet with aluminum foil and coat lightly with coconut oil cooking spray. Spray a 9 x 13-inch baking dish, line it with parchment paper and set aside.

2. Spread out the oats, almonds, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, and shredded coconut on the prepared baking sheet and roast in the oven for 8 to 10 minutes.



3. In the meantime, in a large saucepan over low heat, combine the brown rice syrup, almond butter, vanilla, coconut oil, and salt and cook, stirring, until heated through and combined well using a spatula.



4. Once the granola mixture has toasted, remove it from the oven, add the toasted sesame seeds, ground flaxseed, dried cherries, and toss to evenly combine. Using the foil as an

aid, transfer the granola mixture into the large saucepan with the wet mixture. Mix well with a spatula to coat evenly.

6. Once the mixture is well combined and slightly cool, pour the granola into the prepared baking dish and press it down firmly, to evenly distribute it in the dish. Let cool for at least an hour, or overnight.



7. Cut into squares and store in an airtight container.



I packaged them up as gifts for my clients.



Bircher Muesli

Ingredients:

- 1 cup gluten-free oats (I like Bob's Red Mill)
- 1 over ripe banana
- 5 cups almond milk, rice milk or flax seed milk

- 2 Tablespoon raw honey or maple syrup
- 1 Tablespoon chia seeds
- 1 Tablespoon sunflower seeds
- 1 Tablespoon pumpkin seeds
- Options for toppings: Blueberries, raspberries, cacao nibs, goji berries

Directions:

1. Mash up the banana in a mixing bowl with the almond milk and then add in the oats, seeds, chia seeds and sweetener and stir together.
2. Place the bowl in the fridge and allow it to thicken overnight.
3. Top with fresh fruit, cacao nibs, goji berries and enjoy.

Surviving the Holiday Season the Smart Life Way!

As you continue on your holiday adventures, I wanted to be sure you were armed with 3 of my favorite supplements. They are especially helpful for digesting heavy meals and keeping your blood sugar balanced if you're eating things your body might not be used to.

My 3 favorite supplements for digestive health:

1. **Chromium Picolinate** – This trace mineral can boost your insulin's response, so is especially good for meals heavy on the carbohydrates.

2. **Cinnamon** – This power-food has been proven to reduce blood sugar levels and triglycerides in patients with type 2 diabetes, which means that it can be super-effective for those of us with hormonal blood-sugar sensitivities. Sprinkle it on your meals, or pick up a supplement packed with the good stuff.
 3. **Digestive Enzymes** – These enzymes help you break down the food you eat and absorb nutrients better. If you experience indigestion, gas, or bloating, try them out! Rainbow Light is one of my favorite brands.
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Smart Life Guide to Roasted Vegetables

Steps to Roasting Success:

1. **Preheat Well:** Give your oven 20 minutes or more to reach 450 degrees F.
2. **Cook Like with Like:** Use vegetables with similar cooking times on the same baking sheet.
3. **Use Just Enough Oil:** Too much oil may cause burning. I like to mix my oil with vegetable broth.
4. **Give Veggies Plenty of Room:** Arrange veggies in a single layer with space between them. Space is key to keeping the hot air circulating around and browning vegetables not just heating them and letting them steam in their juices.

Add Seasoning Last: Minced garlic, fresh herbs, dried spices and sweeteners can burn at high heat. Stir them into vegetables just before serving – the heat of the vegetables is enough to release their flavors and aromas.

5-10 Minutes	10-15 Minutes	15-20 Minutes	20-25 Minutes	25-30 Minutes
Asparagus spears, trimmed	Brussels Sprouts, halved	Broccoli florets	Carrot chunks	Potato chunks
	Whole Okra pods	Whole cherry tomatoes	Cauliflower florets	Rutabaga cubes
		Whole green beans	Eggplant cubes	Turnip cubes
		Mushrooms (button, shiitake, Portobello)	Fennel chunks	Winter Squash, halved
		Summer Squash slices or chunks	Mushrooms (wild, oyster, trumpet)	Celery root cubes
		Winter Squash chunks	Parsnip chunks	
		Zucchini chunks	Sweet Potato cubes	

Mediterranean Medley

Toss 2 cups zucchini chunks, 1 cup eggplant chunks, 2 cups cherry tomatoes, and 1 cup sliced sweet onions with 2 Tbs. olive oil and 1 Tbs vegetable broth. Spread vegetables on 2 baking sheets and roast 15 to 20 minutes. Transfer to serving dish and toss with 1Tbs. herbs de Provence and 1 tsp. minced garlic. Season with sea salt and pepper to taste.

Vegetable Soup with Cannellini Beans*

This heartwarming, healthy soup will comfort you during the coldest wintery days. It is a bowl of nutrition that can stand as a full meal. Add your favorite herbs to this flavorful veggie soup.

Makes 6 servings.

Ingredients

- 2 teaspoons extra virgin olive oil
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup diced yellow onions
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup diced fennel
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup diced celery
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup diced carrots
- 1 cup diced tomatoes
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup diced zucchini
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup diced yellow squash
- 6 cups vegetable stock
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon minced fresh oregano
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon minced fresh thyme
- 1 teaspoon minced fresh parsley
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 cups chiffonade spinach or kale
- 1 cup canned cannellini beans (drained and rinsed)
- 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon sea salt
- freshly ground black pepper to taste

Directions

1. Heat oil in large saucepan. Saute onions, fennel, celery and carrots until onions are translucent. Add tomatoes and cook 5 minutes. Add zucchini and yellow squash and cook 5 more minutes.
2. Add stock and herbs and simmer for 1 hour.
3. Add spinach or kale, beans, vinegar, salt and pepper and mix well. Remove and discard bay leaf.

Natural Applesauce

Ingredients

- 6 apples, peeled and chopped (your choice of apple, I

used organic Pink Ladies)

- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon cinnamon (or more if you like cinnamon like we do)
- About $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of water to cover the bottom of pot

Directions

1. Place all ingredients in a pot on the stovetop and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to simmer and cover with lid.
2. Simmer apples for about 20 minutes or until soft. The smaller the pieces of chopped apple the faster cook time.
3. Remove from heat and mash with potato masher for chunkier applesauce, or put in a food processor or blender for smoother texture.

Enjoy!

Citrus Marinated Chicken

Ingredients:

6 pieces of chicken (I like to use organic skinless and boneless chicken thighs or skinless chicken legs)

Marinade Ingredients:

- 3 Tbs extra virgin olive oil
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup freshly squeezed orange juice
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 2 Tbs. grated orange peel
- 2 Tbs. grated lemon peel
- 2 Tbs. grated fresh ginger
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 Tbs fresh thyme leaves

- 3 Tbs. sweet chili sauce
- 3 Tbs. Tamari (gluten-free soy sauce)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup organic brown sugar or date sugar
- sea salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

1. In a large bowl, mix together all the ingredients of the marinade and add the chicken. Marinate in the refrigerator for a few hours (you can also leave overnight).
2. Place the marinated chicken pieces in a roasting pan and pour the citrus marinade on top. Bake at 375 degrees for 1 hour. Keep drizzling the sauce over the chicken while cooking.

*Photo from TheKitchn