Classic fall snacks made healthy

Fall brings with it all kinds of classic treats. Whether it's the candy received at Halloween or perhaps a caramel or candy apple from a fall festival, these flavors bring about nostalgia. Many incorporate what's available and fresh in the season—apples, apple cider, cranberries and pumpkin. The following recipes take the classics and make them healthier. Choose your favorite and share with those you love.

Cranberry nut popcorn balls

Makes: 12 servings | Total: 1 hour

Back in the days when people gave out homemade treats at Halloween instead of packaged candy, popcorn balls were the best score. These combine protein and fiber, salty and sweet.[1]

Ingredients

- 6 cups air-popped popcorn (or 1 bag of plain microwave popcorn)
- ⅓ cup honey
- ¼ cup almond butter (or nut butter of your choice)
- ⅓ cup dried cranberries

Preparation

Prepare your popcorn, either in the air popper or the microwave. While the popcorn is popping, heat the honey with the nut butter in a small saucepan over medium heat. Allow the mixture to simmer for a few minutes before removing from heat. Pour the popcorn into a large bowl, then drizzle the almond/honey mixture over the popcorn. Use a large spoon to mix and coat everything thoroughly. Add the cranberries and stir to combine. Allow the mixture to sit at room temperature for about 30 minutes before forming into balls. Make them as big or as small as you'd like. Be sure to pack them firmly, to keep it all together. Wrap in plastic wrap, waxed paper or store in an airtight container. Popcorn balls will keep at room temperature for 3-4 days.

Nutrition

Serving size: 1 ball

Calories: 88 | total fat: 3 g | saturated fat: 0 g | sodium: 7 mg | cholesterol: 0 mg
total carbs: 15 g | fiber: 1 g | sugars: 11 g | protein: 2 g | potassium: 59 mg

Air-fried cinnamon apple chips with caramel sauce

Makes: 4 servings | Prep: 10 min | Total: 25 minutes

What a treat caramel and candy apples are for kids (and adults)! This version[2] is less messy and avoids the half-eaten leftovers that are inevitable when there's a big apple and small appetite.

Ingredients

- 1 (8-oz.) apple such as Fuji or Honeycrisp
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 2 tsp canola oil
- Cooking spray

Preparation

Slice apple thinly. Place slices in a bowl with cinnamon and oil; toss to coat evenly. Coat the air fryer basket well with cooking spray. Place 7 to 8 apple slices in single layer in the basket and cook at 375°F for 12 minutes. Turn the slices every 4 minutes, rearranging to flatten them, as they will move during the cooking process. After cooking, slices will not be completely crisped but will continue to crisp upon cooling. Repeat with remaining apple slices. To serve, place 6 to 8 apple slices on each plate with a small dollop of caramel sauce (recipe below).

4-ingredient date caramel sauce

Makes: 4-6 servings | Prep: 2 min | Cook: 5 min | Total: 1 hour[3]

Ingredients

- 16 medjool dates, pitted (soft)
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- ¾-1 cup of unsweetened almond milk (or low-fat milk of your choice)
- ½ Tbsp sea salt

Preparation

Add all ingredients (starting with ¾ cup almond milk) into a high-powered blender or food processor. Blend until mixture is smooth and there are no date chunks detectable. Add more almond milk, 1-2 Tbsp at a time, if needed to help the blending process or to thin the caramel. Note: If dates are dry or hard, soak them in water for about 30 minutes, drain and then use them in the recipe. Use immediately or store in the fridge for later. Drizzle over cooled apple slices.

Nutrition

Serving size: 6-8 apple chips, about 1 Tbsp sauce (should make 4 servings)

Calories: 166 | total fat: 3 g | saturated fat: 0 g | sodium: 694 mg | cholesterol: 0 mg
total carbs: 37 g | fiber: 4 g | sugars: 31 g | protein: 1 g | potassium: 358 mg

Healthier pumpkin spice latte

Makes: 1 latte | Prep: 5 min | Cook: 6 min

PSL season is a celebration for those who love these flavors. This version[4] is much lower in sugar than the commercially prepared ones. Enjoy the season without the guilt.

Ingredients

- ¼ cup unsweetened vanilla almond milk
- 1 Tbsp pumpkin puree (fresh or canned)
- 2 tsp agave syrup (or granulated sugar)
- ½ tsp pumpkin pie spice
- 6 oz hot coffee

Preparation

Place almond milk, pumpkin and agave syrup in a small saucepan over medium heat. Whisk to combine ingredients. Continue to heat until steamy, about 5-6 minutes, whisking vigorously for the last minute until frothy. While warming, prepare coffee in a large mug. Remove the saucepan from heat. Add the mixture to the coffee. Stir to combine. Sprinkle with pumpkin pie spice.

Nutrition

Per serving

Calories: 80 | total fat: 0 g | saturated fat: 0 g | sodium: 47 mg | cholesterol: 0 mg
total carbs: 16 g | fiber: 5 g | sugars: 5 g | protein: 3 g | potassium: 313 mg

Sweet potato cranberry muffins

Makes: 12 muffins | Prep: 10 min | Cook: 25 min | Total: 35 min

These muffins[5] combine the beloved flavors of the Thanksgiving holiday in one treat.

Ingredients

- 1 ½ cups whole-wheat pastry flour
- ½ cup brown sugar
- ¼ cup finely ground flax seed
- 1 Tbsp pumpkin pie spice
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ tsp baking soda
- 1 cup sweet potato puree (fresh or canned)
- 2 eggs
- ¼ cup plain low-fat Greek yogurt
- ¼ cup unsweetened almond milk (or low-fat milk of your choice)
- ¼ cup unsweetened applesauce
- ¼ cup unsweetened shredded coconut
- ½ cup dried cranberries

Preparation

Preheat oven to 350°F. In a large bowl, mix the dry ingredients (flour, brown sugar, flax, pumpkin pie spice, salt and baking soda). In a separate bowl, combine the wet ingredients (pureed sweet potato, eggs, almond milk, Greek yogurt and applesauce). Add the wet mixture into the dry mixture, stirring gently until mostly incorporated. Fold in dried cranberries and shredded coconut. Spoon or scoop equal amounts of mixture into a cooking-oil-sprayed or nonstick muffin tin. Sprinkle some extra unsweetened coconut on top of the muffins, if desired. Bake for 25 minutes (until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out mostly clean).

Nutrition

Per muffin

Calories: 176 | total fat: 3 g | saturated fat: 1 g | sodium: 172 mg | cholesterol: 31 mg
total carbs: 34 g | fiber: 3 g | sugars: 16 g | protein: 6 g | potassium: 168 mg

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[1]Inspired by https://loveinmyoven.com/cranberry-almond-popcorn-balls/#tasty-recipes-10983-jump-target
[2]Adapted from https://www.eatingwell.com/recipe/558551/cinnamon-apple-chips-with-almond-yogurt-dip/
[3]https://www.eatingbirdfood.com/wprm_print/4-ingredient-date-caramel
[4]https://www.teladochealth.com/library/article/healthier-pumpkin-spice-latte-video
[5]https://www.fannetasticfood.com/sweet-potato-cranberry-coconut-muffins/

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