

Raw Date Squares

Swick

Serves 1 | Active Time: 15 minutes | Total Time: 1 hour

Chef's Notes

These date squares freeze very well. You may want to make a double batch, as they seem to disappear quickly. I like to take one with me to eat after a run since they are a great source of energy.

Step 1: Preparing the Date Squares

- 1 cup fresh dates, pitted*
- 1 1/2 cup almonds**
- 1/2 cup cacao nibs***
- 1 banana, peeled and cut into pieces
- 1 tsp pure vanilla or almond extract
- Fleur de sel or other quality salt (to taste)

*Note: Dried dates can be used if you cannot find fresh dates, but If using dried dates, soak before using. Place the dates in either hot water or orange juice for 5 minutes or until soft. Drain before using.

Place the almonds in the bowl of a food processor fitted with the metal blade and process until very fine., Note: Cashews or other nuts also work well in this recipe. You can also use a mix of half almonds and half cashew nuts. The cashew nuts give the mixture a slightly softer texture.

If using, add the nibs and pulse a few times. *Note: A few tablespoons of cocoa powder and a handful of dark chocolate chunks can be used instead of the cacao nibs, but the cacao nibs do add a nice crunch to these delicious power bars.

Scrape the nuts from the food processor into a medium mixing bowl. Set aside.

Add the pitted dates to the food processor and process to a paste. Add the banana and vanilla (almond extract also works well with this recipe). and pulse a few times to blend everything together.

Scrape the date mixture into the nuts. If desired, add a pinch of a good quality salt, such as fleur de sel. This gives a nice contrast of salty and sweet. Mix to blend well.

Step 2: Forming and Serving the Date Squares

- 1/2 cup (approx.) dried shredded coconut

Sprinkle the bottom of a small baking pan with a thin layer of the coconut. You will probably use about half of the coconut.

Using a spatula, gently place the date mixture over the coconut by the spoonful. Gently spread the mixture evenly over the coconut. You may find it easier to use your hands to do this. The mixture is easier to spread if your hands are cold and even slightly wet.

Sprinkle the top with an even coating of the remaining coconut, lightly pressing down to help it stick.

Transfer to the refrigerator or freezer for at least 1 hour to firm up. This makes the bars easier to cut. These date squares are equally good served cold or at room temperature.

When firm, cut into pieces and serve or wrap individually in plastic wrap and store, airtight, frozen.