

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

CHEWY OATMEAL RAISIN COOKIES



The current Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGAs) focuses on building a healthy eating pattern, rich in high nutrient quality foods, and low in empty calories. This doesn't mean that everything you eat needs to be completely absent of ingredients that are typically known for empty calories, such as baked goods, candy and other sweets, chips, sodas, etc. Instead, your focus should be on eating them mindfully and an overall eating pattern that promote optimal performance and health.

Empty calories are the calories that one consumes that provide little or no nutritional value. Saturated fat and added sugar are the biggest culprits of empty calories in the diet. This is why DGAs recommend limits on saturated fat and added sugar to less than 10 percent of total calories. This roughly equates to no more than 50 grams of added sugar per day for most people.

Baking is chemistry, so if you remove all the fat or added sugar without replacing the function those ingredients serve, the dish might fall flat. Fats help cakes rise, influence the amount cookies spread, and help hold thin layers of dough apart for flaky pastries. Just like fats, different types of added sugars will impact the results you see. Sugar helps hold in moisture, makes cookies tender, and can affect browning and crispness.

To cut down on some of these empty calories you can make substitutions in your baked goods while still enjoying your sweets. Applesauce can be used instead of butter or oil, and sometimes sugar, with the added benefit of increasing the fiber content, and reduces the number of total calories. Greek yogurt instead of sour cream, avocado for butter, fig or prune puree for butter, canned pumpkin for oil, and bananas for oil. Toasting coconut flakes or nuts, two calorie-dense ingredients, can increase their flavor potency so the recipe requires less of it to achieve the same flavor without toasting them.

Too many substitutions at once can change the consistency of your recipe. Both applesauce and bananas can be substitutes for sugar and oils. Take it slow. This recipe uses a variety of nutrient quality ingredients to reduce the number of empty calories, adding to the overall nutrition content without impacting the flavor. Next time you make baked goods, try one of these substitutions and play.

Cooking Tips

- This recipe can be used to make 12 cookies. Just place 12 equal scoops on a baking sheet (nonstick and or lightly greased) and bake for 15-28 minutes.

MACROS / SERVING SIZE:

Protein: 6 g Fat: 4 g Carbs: 30 g

% CALORIES OF MACROS / SERVING SIZE:

Calories: 165 Protein: 13% Fat: 18% Carbs: 69%

NUTRIENTS / SERVING SIZE:

Fiber: 5 g Sodium: 117 mg Sat Fat: 1 g

INGREDIENTS (Serves 12)

- 2 cups old fashioned rolled oats, not quick oats
- 1 ½ cups whole wheat flour
- 1 large whole egg
- 2 egg whites
- 1 cup ripe avocado, cubed
- 1 medium-sized very ripe banana
- ½ cup unsweetened apple sauce
- 1 tbsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. salt
- ½ cup raisins
- ½ cup shredded coconut (optional)
- ½ tsp. cinnamon

DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F
2. In a large mixing bowl, mash the banana and avocado flesh until a puree and smooth. Can use a food processor or blender to puree and then add it to a mixing bowl.
3. Add the apple sauce, baking powder, salt, cinnamon and eggs and mix well until all is blended.
4. Fold in the flour, oats until the dry ingredients are wet. Add the raisins and fold in until mixed well.
5. Pour the batter in to a very lightly greased (using cooking spray), baking dish 13x9x2.
6. Bake in the oven for 25-28 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean and the sides are lightly browned.
7. Cut into 12 pieces. Store in a covered container in the refrigerator.

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