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Chocolate Chunk Cranberry Oatmeal Cookies

NATURALLY DELICIOUS RECIPES • Janice Feuer-Haugen

A Bite of Something Sweet

What's in a name? In the case of *Chocolate Chunk Cranberry Oatmeal*

Cookies, the name reveals only a third of the story. The plot thickens with pure maple syrup, almond flour, ground flaxseeds and natural almond butter. And the backstory reveals these tasty cookies as gluten-free, dairy-free and vegan. It takes the whole story to confirm that healthy and delicious, crisp and chewy Chocolate Chunk Cranberry Oatmeal Cookies are just too good not to share.

The Higher the Percentage of Chocolate, the higher the percentage of cocoa solids. The healthiest chocolate, dark chocolate, has at least 60% cocoa solids. Dark chocolate contains high levels of flavonoids, which have anti-inflammatory properties that help counter the damaging effects of aging. By increasing blood flow to the brain, flavonoids have been shown to prevent mental decline in aging adults.

Rich in vitamins and minerals, dark chocolate includes potassium, calcium, magnesium and iron. Plus chocolate not only tastes good, it can actually help you feel better. Chocolate contains an organic compound associated with the

release of endorphins and serotonin in the brain, both of which increase feelings of pleasure and relaxation.

Going by the chocolate percentage makes it easier to choose a healthier chocolate. The higher the percentage of cocoa solids, the less sweet the chocolate.

Beyond cocoa solids, the rest of the ingredients vary by manufacturer, and may include any or all of the following: sugar, cocoa butter, milk fat, an emulsifier, and/or vanilla.

Hand-cutting a bar of 60–70% dark chocolate into chunks is the way to go. As it's especially satisfying to bite into a chunk of soft, melted chocolate. When you include all the chocolate slivers, dust and chunks in the cookie batter, you get that chocolaty goodness throughout each cookie. Rather than just from the random chocolate chips.

A Cup Is Not Always a Cup. A digital scale is very helpful, and perhaps a necessity, when baking with alternative flours. Unless you



bake a lot, chances are you don't keep almond flour and ground flaxseeds in your kitchen. And grinding them yourself, unless your recipe provides weights, becomes confusing.

A cup of whole almonds, for example, when ground in a high-speed blender (or even a food processor) makes more than a cup of almond flour. And ditto for flaxseeds. As I've given you the weights for both almonds and flaxseed in these cookies, weigh them before you grind them into flour. And, voilà, you'll have the perfect amount for the recipe.

A Layer of Air Makes the Difference in having cookies with perfectly golden tops and bottoms,

and virtually no chance of burning. Either use insulated baking pans or make your own. Create that thin, crucial layer of air, by sitting two rimmed baking sheets on top of one another and forming a “double pan.”

Cookies baked on an insulated or double pan take about a third more time in the oven. To have evenly baked cookies, makes it more than worth those extra few minutes.

You Can't Eat Just One. After having to taste-test batch after batch of cookies during the recipe refining process these past couple of weeks, I've decided that Chocolate Chunk Cranberry Oatmeal Cookies need a warning label. Truly, it's nigh unto impossible to eat just one.

Skip the milk. As with milk chocolate, drinking milk with dark chocolate reduces the antioxidant impact. As milk binds with the antioxidants, making them more difficult for your body to absorb.

Want a bite of something sweet? Chocolate Chunk Cranberry Oatmeal Cookies are just right.

Chocolate Chunk Cranberry Oatmeal Cookies

Gluten-free, dairy-free and vegan when made with certified gluten-free oats

Makes 36–40 2 ½-inch cookies

Active Time: 20 minutes

Total Time: 1 hour

Dry Ingredients:

3.9 ounces whole almonds ground to equal 1 cup of almond flour

2.8 ounces whole flaxseeds ground to equal ¾ cup ground flaxseeds

2 cups (7.2 ounces) old-fashioned oats

2 ½ ounces dark chocolate (at least 60% cocoa solids),



hand-cut into chunks about the size of chips
½ cup dried cranberries (preferably fruit-sweetened)
2 teaspoons baking powder
Rounded ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
½ teaspoon sea salt

Wet Ingredients:

¾ cup pure maple syrup or light local honey
½ cup natural almond butter
¼ cup water
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract

1. In a medium mixing bowl, whisk together the almond flour, ground flaxseeds, sea salt, baking powder and cinnamon. When well mixed, use a rubber spatula to fold in the oats, dark chocolate (including all the chunks, slivers and dust) and dried cranberries.

2. Use an immersion or regular blender to combine the wet ingredients until smooth.

3. Make a well in the center of the dry ingredients. Pour the wet ingredients into the well. Use a rubber spatula to combine. Set the batter aside for at least 5 minutes for the flaxseeds to absorb the liquid.

4. While the batter sits, heat the oven to 350° F. Place the oven rack in the center of the oven. Line either two insulated

baking sheets or two “double pans” (two rimmed baking pans sitting on top of one another so there is a layer of air between them) with parchment paper.

5. Use a #40 ice cream or cookie scoop (1 ¾ table-spoons) to form the cookies. Place them about 1 ½ inches apart. (I get 18–21 cookies per 18" x 13" half pan.)

6. Bake one insulated pan or double pan of cookies at a time for 12 minutes. Turn the pan 180° and bake another 6 minutes. The cookies will still be moist in the center.

7. Remove cookies from the oven; bake the other pan.

8. Let the cookies cool about 10 minutes before using a thin-edged spatula to carefully transfer the baked **Chocolate Chunk Cranberry Oatmeal Cookies** to a cooling rack.

9. This recipe makes enough cookies to perhaps have some extras to store in the freezer... for those moments when you want a bite of something sweet. ■

* Thank you, Sonja Goedkoop, RD, for inspiring this recipe.

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