

Janice Feuer-Haugen, chef, food blogger, culinary coach and teacher. Author of five cookbooks including *Fruit-Sweet & Sugar-Free* and *Chocolate Decadence*. She shares her recipes and tips for living everyday healthy, everyday delicious in cooking classes and in her blog: EverydayHealthyEverydayDelicious.com.



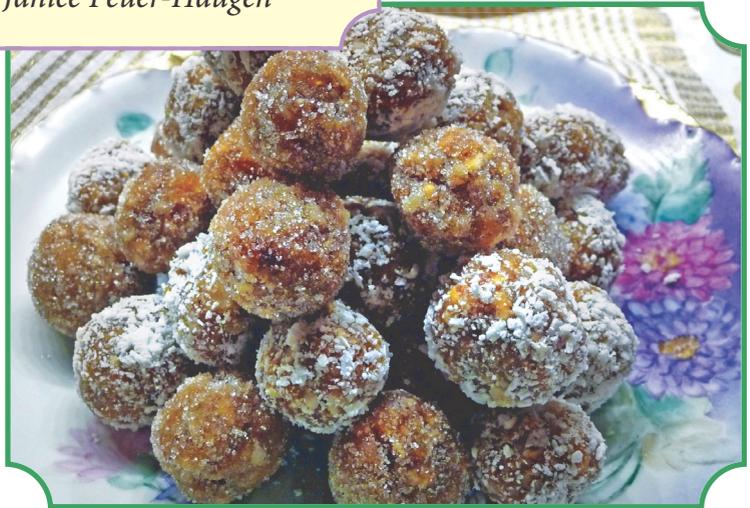
SUGAR PLUMS

Everything Sweet & Delectable & Lovely

NATURALLY DELICIOUS RECIPES • Janice Feuer-Haugen

“The children were nestled all snug in their beds, while visions of sugar plums danced in their heads...”

—A VISIT FROM ST. NICHOLAS,
CLEMENT CLARKE MOORE



Perhaps you, too, have wondered about those visions of sugar plums. I imagined sugar plums as something sweet, luscious and beautiful. But what exactly were those sugar plums (and how do I make them)? With a little research, I read that the visions of sugar plums most likely were of “comfits.” Not much as I imagined, as comfits are a type of hard candy. They were difficult to make and consisted of many layers of sugar covering seeds such as coriander or caraway and possibly of fruit.

Fortunately, I gained a new understanding after reading an article by Samira Kawash in *The Atlantic*. She wrote that “in Tchaikovsky’s day, sugar plum was both the name of a particular candy and *the universal signifier [of] everything sweet and delectable and lovely.*” [Italics mine.] Now I understand. The children’s vision was of something that represented to them “everything sweet and delectable and lovely.”

Over the more than 125 years since the Nutcracker was first performed, sugar plums have gone from comfits to becoming an easy to make and healthful confection of dates, dried apples and apricots, nuts and spice.

MEDJOOLS—THE KING OF DATES

Of the many varieties of dates, large, moist, meaty, semi-soft, sweet and juicy fleshed Medjool dates are widely considered as the very best. Their sticky texture makes them excellent for binding the Sugar Plum ingredients together.

A very good source of dietary fiber, richly flavored

Medjools also contain high levels of essential minerals such as potassium, magnesium, copper, phosphorus, calcium and manganese. The many health benefits of Medjool dates include not only being a great natural sweetener, but also

- Helping to maintain healthy cholesterol levels
- Preventing and relieving constipation
- Providing a surge of energy
- Reducing triglyceride levels
- Boosting bone health

CONCENTRATED FLAVOR & NUTRIENTS IN DRIED FRUITS

Convenient, portable and a good source of protein, dried fruits are a nutritious way to boost overall health. Most fresh fruits retain their nutrient content when dried. Although some of the vitamin C is lost in the drying process, the minerals, fiber, vitamins, antioxidants and protein remain.

DRIED APPLES

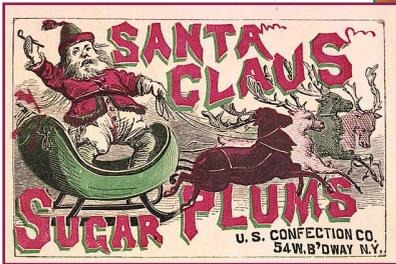
1 cup of dried apples contains 2 grams of protein, 7 grams of fiber and about 200 calories. Dried apples are a rich source of vitamins B5, B3 and C as well as copper, magnesium, selenium, potassium and iron.

DRIED APRICOTS

1 cup of dried apricots contains about 4.4 grams of protein, 9 grams of fiber, and about 300 calories. Dried apricots are an excellent source of potassium and iron along with high amounts of vitamin A.

A GIFT FROM YOUR KITCHEN

Sugar Plums travel well, making them a welcome holiday gift. Being quick, easy and fun to create, Sugar Plums serve as a delicious, healthful gift from your kitchen. And after all these many years they remain “a signifier of everything sweet and delectable and lovely.”



Everything in the food processor.



Forming the sugar plums.

SUGAR PLUMS

Enjoy Sugar Plums as a bite of something sweet at the conclusion of holiday meals. Store them in an air-tight container in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks. Gluten-free. Dairy-free.

Makes about 70 ~ Prep time: 25 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups almonds
- 1 packed cup dried apples
- 1 packed cup dried apricots
- 1 packed cup pitted Medjool dates
- 2 tablespoons local honey
- 2 teaspoons orange zest
- 1 ½ tablespoons fresh orange juice
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ½ teaspoon ground cardamom
- ½ cup unsweetened, shredded coconut
- ½ cup organic sugar

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Heat the oven to 350 degrees. Place the nuts in a single layer on a baking pan. Bake for 6 minutes until lightly toasted. Set aside to cool.
2. To pit the dates, make a small, lengthwise slice into each date with a knife. Use your fingers to pull out the pit.
3. Add the dried apples, apricots and pitted dates into the bowl of a food processor. Top them with the honey, zest, juice and spices. Process using the pulse button until very coarsely chopped. Add the cooled, toasted almonds. Continue to process using

the pulse button until the mixture is finely chopped and well blended.

4. Place the shredded coconut in a blender jar and process until very finely chopped. Transfer the coconut to a small flat bowl.

Put the organic sugar in another small flat bowl. Line a cookie sheet with plastic wrap.

5. Form rounded teaspoon-sized balls of the Sugar Plum mixture. Drop the balls into either the sugar or the coconut. Roll the balls around to coat them completely. Place the Sugar Plums on the plastic wrap-lined cookie sheet.

6. Refrigerate the Sugar Plums for at least 24 hours before serving at room temperature. Store Sugar Plums in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks. They continue to improve in flavor as they age.

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JANICE'S COOKING CLASSES IN BOZEMAN

Check for upcoming classes at:

EverydayHealthyEverydayDelicious.com