

# Healthy Bakes

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## What are Healthy Bakes?

A common misconception is that the terms healthy and baking do not go together. However, the consumption of baked goods does not have to be associated with an unhealthy lifestyle. Baking does not have to be associated with being unhealthy.

Healthy bakes can taste and look just as delicious as your everyday bakes and have more of a benefit to your body without sacrificing your fondness for sweet treats.

Switching over to healthier recipes can be easily achieved with a few small changes. It is very achievable for any individual to enjoy healthy bakes as part of a healthier lifestyle.

Baking healthier treats does not have to include hours of commitment in the kitchen and can be achieved in a matter of minutes with nutrient rich ingredients.



## Benefits associated with the consumption of healthier bakes.

1. Consumption of natural ingredients (seeds, nuts, beans, fresh whole fruits). These ingredients tend to be lower in added sugars and high in fibre.
2. Natural ingredients are loaded with vitamins and minerals which are hugely beneficial to your overall health.
3. The use of non-perishable ingredients (such as nuts, coconut oil, peanut butter, frozen fruit) used in healthy baking means you can bake large batches that will last for 3-5 days in airtight containers, or up to 1 month frozen. Batch cooking can help you plan your week and spend less time baking and more time eating!
4. The consumption of healthy bakes helps limit the consumption of foods high in salt, added sugars, fats and calories.
5. Dark chocolate with a cocoa percentage of 70% or higher in your healthy bakes contains less sugar than milk or white chocolate and is richer in antioxidants.
6. Nuts and seeds contain healthy fats such as monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats. These fats can help reduce the risk of certain cardiovascular diseases.
7. Majority of the core ingredients you use in your healthy bakes are great sources of energy. This can improve your day-to-day lifestyle by improving your mood and boosting your energy.

8. Ingredients such as nuts, fruits, seeds, and eggs all contribute towards your satiety levels, providing you with a feeling of fullness and prevent over-snacking and possible weight gain in the future.
9. The use of fruits, vegetables and honey in your healthy bakes contribute a natural sweetness to your bakes which can be highly beneficial as it avoids the addition of added sugars.
10. These healthy bakes contain ingredients that are easily accessed in your local supermarket and don't contain long lists of ingredients every time you want to bake a healthy treat.

### **Tips on how to start healthy baking.**

1. Invest in a weighing scales as this will help you get accurate measurements in your recipe.
2. Weigh the ingredients carefully, as incorrect measurements of ingredients can affect the texture and taste of the baked goods.
3. Plan your kitchen space so you're motivated to bake healthy treats at home.
4. Stick to the recipe. Don't add or take out anything from the given recipe as it can affect the outcome of the final product.
5. Use high quality ingredients as your cravings will be satisfied for longer. For example: dark instead of milk chocolate.
6. Buy frozen fruit as it prevents waste and is far more cost efficient. Buying frozen fruits doesn't mean you're sacrificing any nutrients in comparison to fresh.
7. Make portion control easier for yourself by weighing out final product and storing them in a seal tight container in the fridge.



Nutrition has an immense impact on an individual's physical and mental health. The more we are in control of what we eat and prepare our own meals, the greater chance we have of fuelling our bodies with the right foods for a healthier lifestyle. You will also feel better both physically and mentally. Healthy baking has the potential to improve our general health as we're incorporating more nutritious foods into our diet, and you are less likely to over consume empty calories such as highly processed treats.

In today's society, there is a lot of confusion when it comes to nutrition. Fad diets, the latest food trends, the diminishing of certain macronutrients, along concerns on the timing of your meals should not be the focus when it comes to achieving a healthy lifestyle. Instead focus on the basics of nutrition and keeping it simple- this is the key to living a healthy lifestyle.

Quality nutrition can be easily achieved when you focus on the basics and try not to get caught up in the minutiae of nutrition. This can be difficult to avoid without the correct resources and health professionals that you can trust! It is important to reach out to suitably qualified nutrition experts such as a dietitian or a registered nutritionist if you need more personalised nutrition advice.

In this blog on the topic of healthy bakes it's important to understand that baking helps people engage in their own nutrition and can help individuals become more aware of the foods they consume on a day-to-day basis. Following a simplistic approach to your diet by including your very own healthy bakes is key to taking control of your nutrition and having a food comes first approach. Baking can be perceived as intimidating and time consuming, but in fact when planned well it is easy to do and can be fit in around your busy schedule. If you follow an overall theme of simplicity in your diet by focusing on the basics of nutrition, it can be as nutritious and healthy as you desire.

Through the practice of baking your own healthy treats you will hopefully become more aware of your nutrition and may even find you enjoy them more than the processed treats you used to turn to. Healthy bakes can taste amazing without being over-complicated and pack in the key nutrients for that healthy lifestyle. They are predominantly made of simple everyday nutritious ingredients. Baked goods do not have to involve long lists of ingredients. In fact, you will notice that many recipes use the same staple ingredients in varying quantities and ratios. Many believe that baking is an expensive activity, but the majority of these ingredients are quite affordable and will not break the bank. Many of the non-perishable ingredients can be bought in bulk to save money and can be stored for long periods of time.

When it comes to the consumption of healthy bakes, and really an overall approach to your diet, it's important to incorporate BALANCE. Balance is an important aspect to consider when it comes to achieving a healthy lifestyle. Avoid disregarding certain food types and incorporate treats you enjoy as part of a balanced diet. It is very important to understand that these healthy bakes are treats and whilst they should be included in your diet to be enjoyed, they shouldn't contribute to a large proportion of your general diet. The introduction of healthy bakes in your diet can help you to consistently make better food choices!



## 1. Start simple and avoid over complicating the process.

- **Educate Yourself:**

Becoming more aware of foods and ingredients that you bake with and consume is important for following a healthy lifestyle. Discover the foods you enjoy, and this will make the baking process less complicated and more enjoyable. When looking for advice on certain food groups or ingredients look out for credible scientific websites or qualified professionals such as a dietitian or registered nutritionist.

- **Plan and Prepare:**

Planning is key to avoid over complicating the process. Write out your ingredients and where to buy them- making lists will not only be more efficient and save you time but will make the process much easier. Time management is critical when it comes to the success and efficiency of baking your healthy treats. Once planning becomes a habit you will feel more motivation and enjoyment when it comes to your healthy baking. If you are struggling to understand the key concepts of nutrition visit the HSE website where the food pyramid is widely available with correct portion sizes and information on all macro and micronutrients.

- **Mindfulness in the Kitchen:**

Focusing on the basic healthy ingredients in your kitchen when baking these healthy treats can make the experience far more enjoyable. When you are mindful of the ingredients you use and adhere to correct measurements and proportions of each ingredient in the recipe it will result in delicious, nutritious baked goods. Baking not only results in delicious food but it can also be very beneficial for your overall mental wellbeing, and the process can often feel therapeutic.

## 2. The core ingredients for any healthy bake:

Below are the key nutritious ingredients that will cover many recipes online, as well as the recipes included below.

Having these core ingredients in your home decreases the amount of money spent when you want to try a new recipe. It also keeps the process simple and easy to complete in the comfort of your own home!

### **Key Ingredients:**

- Nut butters (almond, cashew, peanut, etc.)
- Milk (dairy or non-dairy i.e. almond, cashew, soya)
- Coconut oil
- Mixed seeds
- Yogurt
- Dark chocolate
- Eggs
- Bananas
- Fruit- fresh or frozen
- Chia seeds
- Porridge oats
- Lemons
- Maple syrup or honey

- Raw nuts and seeds
- Dates
- Protein powder
- Chickpeas
- Sweet potato (Yes, surprisingly enough the nutritious sweet potato is a key ingredient in many healthy chocolate fudge brownies)

**3. Examples of healthy baking recipes that contain these key nutritious ingredients:**

**Caramel Cashew Nut Bites**

**Ingredients:**

- Cashew nuts 80g
- Low fat coconut milk 20ml
- Dates 140g
- Desiccated coconut 10g
- Vanilla whey protein 30g
- Porridge oats 40g

**Method:**

1. Blitz the dates and cashew nuts in a blender along with the porridge oats.
2. Add the vanilla whey protein to the date mixture.
3. Next add the coconut milk and mix until fully combined.
4. Now the ingredients are fully combined, divide the mixture into 10 individual balls and roll until smooth.
5. Each individual ball should now be rolled in desiccated coconut until fully coated.
6. Place the balls into the refrigerator for two hours until they set fully and harden

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**Per serving:**

- Kcal: 147
- Protein: 8.4g
- Carbohydrate: 12.6g
- Fats: 9.6g



## **Banana Blueberry Oat Bread**

### **Ingredients:**

- Porridge oats 250g
- 3 Bananas
- Blueberries 50g
- Baking powder 2 tsp
- Mixed seeds 30g
- Mixed nuts 30g
- 300g Greek yogurt
- 3 Eggs



### **Method:**

1. Pre-heat the oven to 180°C.
2. Mash the bananas in a bowl with a fork until you achieve a pureed texture.
3. Stir in the yogurt until smooth.
4. Fold the seeds, nuts, and oats into the wet ingredients until fully combined.
5. Gently fold in the blueberries until well dispersed in the mixture.
6. Pour the batter into a prepared loaf tin with parchment paper.
7. Bake in the oven for 60 minutes until golden brown on top and when a toothpick comes out clean from the loaf.
8. Allow to cool for 30-40 minutes before serving.
9. Can be stored in an airtight container for 4-5 days.

**This post was written for NutriPD by Katie Garvey, a BSc Public Health Nutrition student.**