

Nut and Seed Energy Bars

I know, I know, it's a boring title for a recipe. But here's the thing: it doesn't really matter which nuts and seeds you pack into these portable little snacks, as long as the total is about 5 cups. I didn't want to get all didactic on you. Go wild. Also, use peanut butter instead of almond butter, if you'd like, or chopped dried cherries or raisins in place of the apricots or cranberries. Just do me a favor: when you're mixing the whole thing together in a big bowl, when no one's looking, stick a hand into the mixture and squeeze. Just for a second. It's sticky and messy, but it's also fun—and isn't that what snacks should be?

If you can't find DuChilly hazelnuts, which don't require skinning, toast and skin regular hazelnuts separately.

Makes about 2 dozen squares

Active time: 15 minutes

- 1 cup raw pepitas
- 1 cup raw sunflower seeds
- 1 cup raw almonds
- 1 cup raw hazelnuts
- 1 cup raw (shelled) pistachios
- 10 dates, pitted
- 1/2 cup brown rice syrup
- 2 tablespoons maple syrup
- 2 teaspoons arrowroot powder
- 1/4 cup unsalted almond butter
- 1 teaspoon sea salt
- 1 cup dried cranberries
- 1/2 cup dried apricots, chopped
- 2 cups crispy rice cereal

Preheat the oven to 400°F.

Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Add the pepitas, sunflower seeds, almonds, hazelnuts, and pistachios, stir to blend, and toast for 7 to 10 minutes, stirring once or twice, or until the seeds and nuts are lightly browned. Set aside.

Meanwhile, whirl the dates in a food processor fitted with the blade attachment until pureed. (The mixture will be thick and pasty.)

Add the brown rice and maple syrups to a large soup pot. Bring the syrups to a boil over medium heat. Add the arrowroot powder, almond butter, sea salt, and date puree, and whisk until smooth. Remove the pot from the heat. Stir in the toasted nuts and seeds, cranberries, and apricots, then gently fold in the cereal.

Line a 9- by 13-inch pan with parchment or waxed paper, so the paper comes all the way up the sides of the pan. Dump the seed and nut mixture into the pan, spreading it out in a roughly even layer. Press another sheet of parchment or waxed paper on top, and use a drinking glass or a spice jar to press and roll the mixture into a flat, even layer. Let the bars cool completely.

Peel the top layer of paper off, invert the bars onto a large cutting board, and peel off the other layer of paper. Using a really big knife, cut the bars into 2- by 2-inch squares. (Be decisive when you cut; meek cutting will result in bars with jagged edges.)

Store the bars in an airtight container at room temperature, up to 3 days, or wrap and freeze individually. Grab and go in the morning!