



# Ask a Nutritionist

by Tara Postnikoff

## Healthy Indulgences

**Q: What are some healthier versions of typical treats or desserts?**

**A:** As a holistic nutritionist and athlete, I always look for the best quality ingredients for the food I prepare and eat. I try to make as much as possible from scratch and use the freshest ingredients available. That way, I know that I'm getting the nutrients I need to properly nourish and fuel my body.

But I get tempted too: by the smell of baked goods in the supermarket; by the delicious-looking pictures on dessert packages; or by the idea of cold ice cream on a hot day. I am not a trained chef or baker, but I love to create or re-create food items—especially treats—in a healthy way, while still having them taste good. After all, if it's not enjoyable, what's the point?

Here are some tips and ideas to change your dessert into a healthy indulgence:

**Don't go low fat.** One of my pet peeves is "low fat". If there's no fat, it's not going to taste good or satisfy you—meaning you are more likely to overeat. My tendency is to break out the butter or the coconut oil (in appropriate amounts) when cooking and baking.

**Go natural.** Avoid sugar-free sweeteners such as sucralose, aspartame and acesulfame potassium. If you are looking for sugar substitutes, you can try applesauce or mashed bananas in some recipes. Dried fruits can also be good to increase the sweetness without the wetness. Raw honey and pure maple syrup

can also be used in place of white or brown sugar. Another option is to reduce the sugar. I know baking is often a precise science, but in many recipes you can cut out a quarter of the sugar with no noticeable change in texture or shape.

**Get creamy.** Avocados make for great dairy-free thickening agents in puddings or creams if you don't mind the green colour. Coconut milk is also a great option in these types of recipes. Both are healthy options for saturated fats.

**Go nuts.** When trying to cook gluten-free and dairy-free, you can be left with few ingredients. I find nuts and seeds are the perfect filler and flour substitute. Although they make the recipe more dense and less fluffy, they are full of nutrients like magnesium, selenium, fibre, protein and healthy fats. Grind up a cup of almonds for your next crust, or use almond meal as a flour substitute in brownies.

Keep in mind that even healthy treats should be counted as treats. They are still extra calories that you may not need, depending on your other food choices and activity level. Just because it's healthier, that doesn't mean you should have it every day or after every meal. You should still aim for balance and prioritize healthy foods in your nutritional decisions. Remember, if you eat it all the time, then it's not a treat! **RR**

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## Tara's Recipes

### Avocado Chocolate Pudding

Half of a chilled avocado  
2 tbsp. (30 mL) raw almond butter  
2 tbsp. (30 mL) raw cocoa powder  
1 tbsp. (15 mL) chia seeds  
1 tbsp. (15 mL) honey  
2 tbsp. (30 mL) unsweetened almond milk

Place all ingredients in a blender or food processor, and blend until a smooth consistency is achieved. If necessary, add more almond milk to thin it out a bit. Chill in fridge for 1-2 hours (optional).

### "Nut" Your Average Snack

1 cup (250 mL) ground almonds (raw)  
1/4 cup (60 mL) raw cacao or cocoa powder  
1/4 cup (60 mL) honey or maple syrup  
1/3 cup (80 mL) almond butter  
1/4 cup (60 mL) coconut flakes (unsulfured)

Using a food processor, grind almonds to a fine powder. Add in cocoa, almond butter and honey and pulse a few more times. With wet hands, roll into small balls about 1.5 to 2 inches in diameter, or the size of a golf ball. Roll balls in coconut flakes. Place in fridge to harden, or freeze for later.