

Fig and Almond Snack Bars



Makes 25 1.5-x-1.5-inch bars

Tips:

- Very soft dried black mission figs work best in this recipe (I like Sun-Maid brand). Look for them next to the raisins at the grocery store. If your figs are slightly dry, soak them in hot water for 20 minutes, drain well, and proceed with the recipe. **This recipe will not work with fresh figs. Dried figs only.**
- Toast almonds in a 300°F oven until just a shade darker, 15 to 18 minutes. Keep a close eye on them to avoid burning (because your oven may cook faster than mine). Cool completely. If using coconut flakes as a topping, toast until the edges are just starting to turn brown, about 2 minutes.
- Be sure to press the mixture very firmly into the pan so your bars stay together and cut without crumbling.
- Get your toppings ready before making the glaze so that they adhere to the chocolate before it sets.

For the bars

2 packed cups (14 oz.) dried figs, stems snipped off
1½ cups raw, unsalted almonds or cashews, toasted
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
2 tablespoons honey or date syrup
1 teaspoon kosher salt
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
½ teaspoon orange blossom water or orange extract

For the chocolate glaze

6 ounces dark chocolate (65% or more cacao), chopped into pieces, or 1 cup dark chocolate chips
1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

To top the bars

2 tablespoons chopped dried mango
2 tablespoons unsweetened coconut flakes, toasted
2 tablespoon organic dried rose petals

BRAIN HEALTH KITCHEN by Annie Fenn, M.D.

Instructions:

Line a rimmed 8-x-8-inch baking pan with parchment paper with two sides overhanging; set aside.

Combine the figs and almonds in the bowl of a food processor. Pulse until the nuts are finely ground. Add the oil, honey, salt, and vanilla and orange extracts. Process on high until the mixture starts to clump and you can easily pinch it together with your fingers, about 1 minute. Add additional olive oil by the teaspoon, if needed, until it comes together.

Dump the fig and almond mixture into the pan and press into an even layer. Use the bottom of a measuring cup or sturdy spatula to press firmly until compact. **This part is crucial so the bars don't crumble when you cut them.** Use some elbow grease to really compress into a firm even layer, especially at the corners. Set aside.

To make the glaze, place the chocolate in a heatproof bowl that fits over a small saucepan. Fill the saucepan with just enough water to create a steam bath, but not enough to touch the bottom of the bowl. Bring the water to a gentle boil and stir the chocolate as it melts. (You can also melt the chocolate in the microwave on medium power, stirring every 20 seconds.) Once smooth, turn off the heat and stir in the oil.

Pour the glaze over the bars and spread with a spatula to coat evenly. Immediately scatter the toppings evenly atop the bar. Refrigerate for at least 30 minutes until glaze is set. Let sit at room temperature to allow the chocolate to soften slightly, then use a large knife to cut into 25 1.5-x-1.5-inch bars.

To store: Refrigerate bars in an airtight container for up to 1 week or freeze for up to 3 months.

Topping Variations:

1. **Jungle Bars:** Scatter the bars with 2 tablespoons each chopped dried mango, toasted coconut flakes, and organic dried rose petals.
2. **Espresso Boost:** Stir 2 tablespoons of espresso powder (such as Medaglia d'Oro) into the chocolate glaze and sprinkle with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup cacao nibs and pinches of flaky salt.
3. **Peanut or Almond Butter/Chocolate Swirl:** Using a butter knife or offset spatula, swirl $\frac{1}{4}$ cup well-stirred natural peanut or almond butter into the chocolate layer before it sets. Sprinkle with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup chopped peanuts or almonds.
4. **Seeded:** Sprinkle evenly with 2 tablespoons toasted sesame seeds, 2 tablespoons hemp seeds, and 2 tablespoons toasted pumpkin seeds.
5. **Chocolate Orange:** Add $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon orange blossom water or orange extract to the fig and almond mixture. Stir the zest of 1 organic orange into the chocolate glaze and sprinkle with 2 tablespoons of grated dark chocolate.
6. **Chocolate Hazelnut:** Sprinkle with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped toasted and skinned hazelnuts and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup cacao nibs.