

Your guide to

Dark chocolate

Bonus:
5 dark
chocolate
recipes

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You can probably confirm from experience, but research proves it: Chocolate is the most craved food in the world. And while there are lots of sugar-packed varieties out there, dark chocolate can be the ultimate secret weapon when you're craving a treat but want to keep your blood sugar in check.



What is dark chocolate?

Dark chocolate is the second most popular type of chocolate and is noticeably less sweet than milk chocolate. It's made from just a few ingredients: cocoa nibs (ground into a liquid called chocolate liquor), cocoa butter, and sugar. Because it has less sugar and no dairy (unlike milk or white chocolate), dark chocolate has a firmer texture and a pure, rich chocolate flavor.

What are those numbers I see on a dark chocolate package?

Most dark chocolate bars have a number on the front of the package that shows just how chocolaty they are (versus how sweet they are). The higher the percentage, the more intense the flavor and the less sweet they are. For example, a 50% dark chocolate will be much sweeter than a 70% chocolate.



Is dark chocolate really healthy?

Cocoa, which is the base of dark chocolate, is rich in something called flavanols, and dark chocolate contains up to two to three times more flavanol-rich cocoa solids than milk chocolate. Research shows that flavanols may help to protect the heart, and they've also been shown to increase insulin sensitivity, which makes dark chocolate a better treat for those managing their blood sugar.

To get the most health benefits from your dark chocolate, choose a 70% or higher bar: more flavanols and minerals (iron, magnesium) and less sugar. You can go all the way up to 100%, but make sure to check the label — anything over 85% could include additional fat or sugar to mellow the intensity of the chocolate.

A little goes a long way

Though the research on dark chocolate's health benefits is solid, it's important to remember that dark chocolate is still fairly high in calories (150-170 calories per ounce), so you don't want to indulge too much or too often. Make sure to stick with higher-percentage chocolate (less sugar) and eat mindfully.

How to enjoy dark chocolate healthfully

Don't reach for plain dark chocolate when you're hungry; you'll be tempted to overindulge. Save it for after lunch or dinner when you've had some protein and fiber to balance things out and slow down the absorption of sugar into your bloodstream. Or if you are craving sweets, you can add a small serving to your balanced meal or treat.



Add 1-2 tablespoons of unsweetened dark chocolate to your morning protein shake. Including this treat as part of a balanced meal will help satisfy your craving while keep your total calories and blood sugar in check.



Drizzle 1-2 tablespoons of melted dark chocolate over oatmeal, yogurt, or fresh fruit for a portioned treat, along with your healthy snack or meal.



Blend 1-2 tablespoons of unprocessed cocoa with one large frozen banana and a little bit of unsweetened almond milk for a dairy-free version of chocolate ice cream.

5 Healthy and delicious dark chocolate recipes ↘



Dark chocolate dessert bar

Choose your toppings here to satisfy your taste buds. Take half the bar and immediately store or share the second half of the bar.

Ingredients

1 oz of high-quality dark chocolate
1 Tbsp cranberries
OR dried strawberries

1 Tbsp crushed peanuts
OR chopped almonds

Preparation

Makes 2 servings
Preparation time: 3 minutes
Cook time: 2 minutes

Place a sheet of parchment paper over a dinner-size plate and put aside.

Melt dark chocolate in the microwave for about 1 minute. Stir and microwave for another 20-30 seconds, if necessary.

Using the back of a spoon, spread the melted chocolate into a rectangular chocolate bar shape on the parchment-lined plate. Add topping combination, sprinkling on top of chocolate. Lightly press into the formed bar. Place in the refrigerator for 5 minutes or until hardened. Break in half for 2 servings.

Nutrition per serving (½ bar per serving)

Calories	Fat	Sat.Fat	Sodium	Cholesterol	Carbs	Fiber	Sugars	Protein	Potassium
68	5 g	2 g	0 mg	0 mg	7 g	2 g	3 g	2 g	117 mg



Dark chocolate banana muffins

These tasty muffins are packed with whole grains and bananas, making them a tasty breakfast or snack option, as well as part of your daily treat .

Ingredients

3 medium ripe bananas, mashed
¼ cup honey
1 tsp vanilla extract
1 large egg
2 Tbsp olive oil
½ cup nonfat plain Greek yogurt
1 cup whole wheat pastry flour
½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1 tsp baking soda
⅛ tsp salt
½ cup dark chocolate chips, divided
Nonstick cooking spray

Preparation

Makes 12 servings

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cook time: 25 minutes

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Spray a regular-size muffin pan with nonstick cooking spray.

Mix bananas, honey, vanilla, egg, oil, and Greek yogurt until well combined. Add flour, cocoa powder, baking soda, and salt. Mix until combined. Stir in ⅓ cup of chocolate chips.

Pour batter into prepared muffin cups. Sprinkle remaining chocolate chips on top. Bake for 25 minutes until a toothpick comes out clean from the center of a muffin.

Nutrition per serving (1 muffin per serving)

Calories	Fat	Sat.Fat	Sodium	Cholesterol	Carbs	Fiber	Sugars	Protein	Potassium
177	7 g	2 g	135 mg	16 g	29 g	4 g	15 g	4 g	117 mg



Dark chocolate peanut butter bites

After dinner is often the time when a bite of something sweet seems to create satisfaction for the rest of the night. Why not make that bite the healthiest and tastiest one it can be? If you love peanut butter and are up for dark chocolate, here you go!

Ingredients

For the Chocolate Layer:

2 Tbsp creamy natural peanut butter
1 Tbsp olive oil
1 Tbsp maple syrup
1 tsp vanilla extract
2 Tbsp unsweetened cocoa powder

For the Peanut Butter Layer:

⅓ cup creamy natural peanut butter
1 Tbsp maple syrup
1 tsp vanilla extract
⅛ tsp salt

Preparation

Makes 12 servings

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Chill time: 20 minutes

Line a mini muffin pan with mini cupcake liners and put aside.

Chocolate Layer: In a small glass bowl, add peanut butter, olive oil, and maple syrup. Microwave for 30 seconds on medium power and stir until smooth. Add vanilla extract and cocoa powder and stir again. Add a teaspoonful of the chocolate mixture to each liner. Place the muffin tin in the freezer.

Peanut Butter Layer: In another small glass bowl, add peanut butter and maple syrup. Microwave for 30 seconds on medium power and stir until smooth. Add vanilla extract and salt and stir again.

Remove muffin tin from the freezer. Scoop a teaspoonful of the peanut butter mixture and add to each chocolate layer. Freeze for 30 minutes or until solid. Remove liners from each bite and store in the refrigerator for up to a week or in the freezer for up to 2 months.

Nutrition per serving (1 per serving)

Calories	Fat	Sat.Fat	Sodium	Cholesterol	Carbs	Fiber	Sugars	Protein	Potassium
78	5 g	1 g	60 mg	0 mg	5 g	1 g	3 g	2 g	22 mg



Mole sauce

We cannot talk about the benefits of dark chocolate without a tasty, unique mole sauce on the menu. There is so much you can do with mole sauce. It's perfect for adding a fun twist to any of your traditional Mexican dishes, from chicken and fish to shrimp and vegetables.

Ingredients

2 Tbsp olive oil
1 onion, chopped fine
¼ cup chili powder (personalize your spice - how much is best for you!)
1 tsp ancho powder (or sauce from chipotle pepper can)
2 Tbsp light brown sugar
2 cloves garlic, minced
¾ tsp cinnamon
Pinch of ground cloves
15 oz can diced tomatoes, no added sodium
3 Tbsp peanut butter, no added salt
3 Tbsp dark cocoa powder
2 cups water
Salt and pepper to taste

Preparation

Makes 12 servings

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cook time: 30 minutes

Heat the olive oil in a saucepan over medium heat. Add the chopped onion and cook, stirring often, until the onions are brown, approximately 10 minutes.

Add the chili powder, ancho chili powder, brown sugar, garlic, cinnamon, and cloves and stir for 1 minute, until the mix is fragrant. Add the tomatoes, peanut butter, cocoa powder, and water. Stir to combine.

Reduce the heat to medium-low and cook the sauce, stirring occasionally, for 15 minutes. Remove from heat and season, to taste, with salt and pepper. Serve with your choice of protein or veggies.

Nutrition per serving (⅓ cup per serving)

Calories	Fat	Sat.Fat	Sodium	Cholesterol	Carbs	Fiber	Sugars	Protein	Potassium
61	3 g	1 g	74 mg	0 mg	8 g	2 g	4 g	2 g	72 mg



Dark chocolate breakfast smoothie

Start your day with this creamy, dreamy, balanced meal-in-a-glass.

Ingredients

1 ripe banana
1 cup plain nonfat Greek yogurt
½ cup oats, old fashioned or quick cooking
3 Tbsp dark cocoa powder
½ cup almond milk, vanilla, unsweetened
Ice to thicken

Preparation

Makes 1 serving
Preparation time: 5 minutes

Place all ingredients except ice in a high-speed blender and puree until smooth. Start with a handful of ice and add more until you've reached desired consistency.

Nutrition per serving (1 per serving)

Calories	Fat	Sat.Fat	Sodium	Cholesterol	Carbs	Fiber	Sugars	Protein	Potassium
415	6 g	1 g	366 mg	0 mg	50 g	13 g	22 g	33 g	592 mg