

The delights of botanical patisserie



Christmas is a time for indulgence, but if you make conscious choices about what to eat you can be physically and emotionally satisfied without the discomfort of over indulging. With these recipes from botanical cuisine chef Anya Ladra, co-founder of Raw Fairies, you can have your cake and eat it too.

PHOTOGRAPHS: Angela Chan

Raw Chocolate Mousse Cake (V)

Dates provide the natural sweetness in this cake. They are the oldest fruit, with the highest concentration of fruit sugars. It also contains avocado and coconut butter, both of which are full of good fats.

Crust:

2 cups almonds, soaked for 6 hours or overnight
6 soft dates
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 teaspoons maple syrup (note that strictly this is not raw)
Pinch of salt (Himalayan pink salt or fine sea salt if possible)

Drain and rinse the almonds. Place all ingredients in a food processor and chop into a fine meal. The mixture should be crumbly and sticky. If is too dry, add a few tablespoons of filtered or mineral water. Press the dough into the sides and the bottom of a loose bottom cake tin.

Filling:

1 1/2 cup soft dates
3 ripe avocados
1 tablespoon agave nectar
1 tablespoon coconut butter
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
4 rounded tablespoons raw cacao powder
1/2 cup raw carob powder

Blend the dates, vanilla extract, coconut butter

and agave into a smooth paste. Scoop the avocados into the food processor with the dates and blend until smooth. Add the carob and cacao powder. Spread the mousse over the crust.

Frosting:

1 cup cashews, soaked for at least 30 minutes
6 soft dates
1 tablespoon agave nectar
1 tablespoon coconut butter
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

In a food processor, blend all the ingredients until well combined and creamy, adding more water as needed. Spread on top of the mousse. Decorate the cake with fresh berries – goji berries are excellent for colour. Refrigerate for a few hours at least, or overnight.

Raw Chocolate Mousse (V)

If you have ingredients left over from your cake and you need a delicious dessert that is quick and easy, try this simple mousse. It's gorgeously rich, so you can go easy on the serving size and create a beautifully light, yet satisfying, finish to a meal. This recipe should serve 4 people.

2 ripe avocados
 1 cup soft dates
 1 tablespoon coconut butter
 Pinch of salt
 1 teaspoon vanilla essence
 ½ cup carob powder
 4 tablespoons raw cacao powder
 Handful raw cacao nibs to garnish

In a food processor, mix the dates, coconut butter, salt and vanilla essence until smooth. Add the avocados and blend, then add the rest of the ingredients and blend again. Pour into serving bowls and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes before serving, sprinkled with raw cacao nibs.

Cashew, Goji Berry and Raw Cacao Nut Milkshake (V)

Another way to put your cake ingredients to good use is with a creamy, dairy-free nut milkshake. Almonds are almost 20% protein, making this a satisfying snack as well as a sweet end to a meal. Goji berries are a very rich source of anti oxidants, including vitamin C and beta carotene. In their native Himalayan region goji berries are regarded as an anti ageing, strength building superfood. This recipe should serve 2 people.

1 cup cashews, soaked overnight
 4 cups filtered or mineral water
 ¼ cup raw cacao nibs
 2 tablespoons goji berries, soaked for at least 30 minutes
 1 cup fresh berries such as blueberries
 1 teaspoon vanilla essence
 1 teaspoon agave nectar or raw honey
 Pinch of salt

In a blender, puree all of the ingredients until smooth. A high powered blender (such as a Vita-Mix) is ideal for making nut milkshakes, but you can use a standard blender if you're careful.





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Mango Coconut Cheesecake (V)

These beautiful individual cheese cake-style desserts have a thin nut base and creamy mango mousse filling. The mango has been around 4000 years and is related surprisingly to the cashew and pistachio nut. An entire history and culture revolves around the mango going back thousands of years during the Buddha's time and well before that. This recipe should serve 4 people.

Crust:

You can use the same almond crust as for the Raw Chocolate Mousse Cake.

Filling:

2 mangoes, peeled and diced
1 cup cashews, soaked for at least 30 minutes
1 tablespoon coconut butter
5 soft dates

2 tablespoons lime juice
Pinch of salt
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

In a food processor, blend all the ingredients until smooth. Press the almond dough into small ring moulds. Follow with the mousse filling over the crust. Chill for a couple of hours and remove from the mould. Decorate with blackberries or other berries.

Mango Papaya Coconut Cream Pie with Raspberry Frosting

This tropical dessert is a fruity alternative to chocolate. The papaya in this dessert is especially good because it contains a digestive enzyme called papain.

Crust:

2 cups pecans, soaked for at least 2 hours
5 soft dates
1 tablespoon maple syrup
2 tablespoons raw carob powder
1 tablespoon cinnamon
2 teaspoons freshly ground nutmeg
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
Pinch of salt

Pulse the nuts in a food processor. Add the rest of the crust ingredients and process until smooth. Press the dough into a loose bottom cake tin.

Filling:

1 mango, thinly sliced
1/2 large ripe papaya, thinly sliced

Coconut Cream:

1/2 cup cashews, soaked for at least 2 hours



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Young Thai coconut meat - from 1 coconut, chopped
4 soft dates
1 tablespoon coconut butter
Pinch of salt
1 teaspoon vanilla essence

Mix all ingredients in a blender, adding filtered water or fresh coconut water to get it all to combine.

Raspberry Frosting:

1 cup cashews, soaked for at least 2 hours
1/2 cup fresh or frozen raspberries
1 tiny slice of fresh beetroot, peeled and chopped (for colour)
1 teaspoon vanilla essence
1 tablespoon agave nectar

Blend in a food processor until smooth. Lay the slices of mango in the crust and

spread over the coconut cream, follow with papaya slices, and finally top with the frosting. Refrigerate for 5 hours, or overnight.



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