



The Egyptian Mummy Diet Paradox

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The Egyptian mummy diet paradox has fueled the rise of the theory that carbohydrates are the cause of obesity, heart disease, type-2 diabetes, and other modern diseases. And not just carbohydrates in the form of refined sugars, but also naturally carbohydrate-rich foods, such as rice, corn, potatoes, wheat, beans, and barley. Popular low-carb diets promoting this belief are Atkins, Carbohydrate Addicts, Zone, South Beach, Dukan, and Protein Power. [Authors](#) have specifically invoked the Egyptian mummy diet paradox as solid evidence to support their theories that grains, vegetables, and fruits are the sources of illnesses for Westerners, and that meat, dairy, and eggs are actually health foods. But a closer look is warranted. PAGE 2

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However, the belief that carbohydrates are bad and saturated fat is good disregards [50 years of diet-heart research](#) with contrary findings and dozens of metabolic (ward-type-feeding) experiments showing that eating saturated fat and/or cholesterol causes an adverse effect on blood lipids. In addition, thousands of relevant animal studies on the damaging effects of saturated fat and cholesterol are being ignored.



Ancient Egyptian Depiction of Food Offering

Why They Are Called “Mummies”

Ancient Egyptians believed the body must be preserved for the survival of the soul after death into the afterlife. The word “mummy” is derived from the Persian word “mumia,” referring to pitch, a black, asphalt-like substance that oozed from the “Mummy Mountain” in Persia and was used in the embalming process. Thus, the remains of the often-blackened bodies are called mummies.

Findings in contemporary populations of people also contradict the Egyptian mummy diet paradox. For example, the [Tarahumara](#) people, indigenous to northwestern Mexico, live primarily on corn, beans, and squash with very few animal foods and are free of atherosclerosis, obesity, and other modern diseases. Their genetic counterparts, the [Pima](#), living in Arizona, following a diet filled with meat, eggs, and cheese are riddled with heart disease, obesity, type-2 diabetes, and kidney failure. The same freedom from modern diseases can be said about millions of people currently living in rural South America, Central America, Asia, and Africa on diets of potatoes, corn, rice, millet, cassava, and other starch vegetables. However, as these same people migrate to the cities and change to a diet centered on animal foods and processed foods they become fat and sick, just like many of the Egyptians of ancient times and most of the Westerners of today.

Discoveries of Atherosclerosis in Mummies

Beginning in 1898, shortly after the discovery of x-rays, scientists focused their penetrating beams on mummies. The x-rays readily detected calcium deposits deep within the bodies of these ancient Egyptians (calcium accumulates in the tissues as a result of years of chronic inflammation). Calcium deposits in the artery walls, a condition referred to as hardening of the arteries, means that the individual has suffered from years of disease characterized by fiery eruptions: atherosclerosis.

A major technological advance in x-rays was the development of computed tomography (CT). This technology uses multiple x-rays, combined with computer analysis, to show three-dimensional pictures of body parts that look almost lifelike. The first CT studies were performed on Egyptian mummies in 1977, and over the next three decades CT technology has been employed to examine hundreds of mummies.

The controversy of diet and artery disease was raised to new heights by the April 2011 report in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology (JACC) of Cardiovascular Imaging* showing with CT that half (20 out of 44) of ancient Egyptian mummies with identifiable cardiovascular structures had evidence of atherosclerosis. Calcifications were identified in the heart, aorta, and blood vessels of the legs. Examinations of the hearts and bodies of modern Americans and Europeans by CT show a similar incidence of calcification due to atherosclerosis.

The remains studied were of people who had lived between 1500 and 3500 years ago in Egypt. The life expectancy at the time was between 40 and 50 years, even among the more affluent members of society. Older mummies (average 45 years) showed more artery disease than younger ones (average age of 34.5 years). Three bodies had coronary artery disease, and two mummies showed evidence of severe disease involving virtually every artery system. Among the 25 mummies for whom social position could be determined, 10 were priests or priestesses. The most ancient mummy with hardening of the arteries was the princess Ahmose-Meyret-Anon. She lived between about 1580 and 1550 BC, and so far, she is the earliest known case of coronary atherosclerosis.

There is some clinical correlation to these x-ray findings. [Historical writings](#) document heart disease in people who lived more than 2000 years ago—during times when there were no refrigerators or fast food restaurants. People exercised as a mode of transportation, and tobacco was not grown in the old world. Hippocrates (469-377 BC) described sudden (cardiac) death, and Erasistratos (300 BC) documented the typical symptoms of peripheral arterial disease (intermittent claudication). Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics mention symptoms consistent with angina, acute myocardial infarction, and congestive heart failure.

Other Western Diseases in Mummies

Atherosclerosis was not the only disease of modern societies identified in ancient Egyptians. The studies of the remains of [Hatshepsut](#), Egypt's greatest woman pharaoh, who reigned more than 3,000 years ago, identified an obese woman with tooth decay. Mummified geese were found inside her tomb, reflecting the rich food consumed by Hatshepsut and other royal Egyptians.

Problems with the teeth are found in mummies. The most common abnormality is wearing down of the teeth by friction caused by eating gritty bread made from flour contaminated by windblown sand and other abrasive materials from the soil and grinding stones. In addition to erosion of the teeth, [examination of the mouth](#) of mummies showed that they had cavities (dental caries), periodontitis, dental abscesses, and missing teeth.

Gallstones have also been found in mummies. Almost all gallstones found in modern people are due to the super-saturation of the bile with cholesterol from consuming meat, eggs, and dairy products. The [bile acids](#) of a mummy buried 3500 years ago were found

to be similar to the bile acid composition of modern man.

Spina bifida (myelomeningocele) is a birth defect where the backbone and spinal canal do not close before birth, producing an often-serious abnormality. This sometimes-fatal condition is due to a diet deficient in the plant-derived nutrients, most importantly folate (the vitamin is folic acid). The study of a six-month-old [infant mummy](#) from 4000 years ago showed the presence of severe spina bifida. The mummified infant's mother was likely a member of aristocracy and ate a diet high in folate-deficient meats, dairy, and eggs. She was lacking in the traditional folate-rich foods of common Egyptians: wheat, barley, vegetables, and fruits.

The Egyptian Mummy Diet Paradox Answered

This apparent contradiction between the disease-filled bodies of mummies and the ancient Egyptian diet is resolved by understanding that people entitled to the rituals of mummification and noble burials were wealthy, typically royalty and priests, not the common person. The rich foods consumed by the elites were vastly different than the frugal, mainly vegetarian, diets that most common farmers and laborers ate.

Hieroglyphic inscriptions on Egyptian temple walls indicate that the royalty regularly consumed beef, sheep, goats, wild fowl, bread, and cake. Excavation of the pyramids found that the foods placed in the burial chambers to provide sustenance for people in the afterlife were ducks, geese, beef, mutton, and lamb. Fish was considered a food for the poor, but was occasionally found in the tombs of the rich.

According to ancient writings, priests cleansed, dressed, and fed the gods' statues in the temples three times a day. The richest of foods were offered to the stone statues of their deities. After the offerings the [priests](#) removed these delicacies from the altar and took them home to feed their families. The [translations](#) of inscriptions on the walls of Egyptian temples showed that priests regularly offered the gods high-fat, high-cholesterol, artery-clogging meals of beef, goose, breads, and cakes. For example, geese, like those found in the tomb of the pharaoh Hatshepsut, is 63 percent fat (20 percent saturated). The bread served was enriched with fat, milk, and eggs. The cakes typically were made with animal fat or oil. A conservative estimate indicates that the diet of royalty was more than 50 percent fat, with a significant portion being saturated fat. The modern Western diet is about the same for most people. Salt intake was also likely high because salt was used as a preservative.

Hair Analysis Proves Ancients Are Like Moderns

Confirmation of the royal Egyptian diet was provided by [research published](#) in 1998 on the molecular makeup of the hair of the mummies. Hair is composed of proteins that are not easily degraded and therefore hair is well preserved for eons for analysis. The carbon, sulfur, and nitrogen isotope compositions of human hair are reliable and powerful indicators of the diet of an individual. When the hairs from Egyptian mummies are compared to those of modern people eating the Western diet the composition is the same, showing they both ate similar diets. (The same kind of hair analysis in this study determined that the Ice Man, preserved in a glacier of the Oetztales Alps 5200 years ago, was essentially vegan.)

It's Not a Mystery. It's the Food.

The well-preserved, disease-ridden remains of ancient Egyptians of the royal class provide unequivocal evidence that atherosclerosis, obesity, and other afflictions commonly experienced in today's developed societies are due to a rich diet high in animal foods. There is nothing paradoxical, old, or new about these findings. Throughout all of recorded human history, almost all people have lived on diets based on starches: corn in Central America, potatoes in South America, rice in the far East, and wheat and barley in the near East (like Egypt). For the common person, feasts occurred only during a few special times a year, usually on holidays. During these celebratory times people would indulge themselves by roasting a pig over a fire or throwing a chicken in the pot of vegetable stew. They could afford extravagance infrequently, and as a result,



atherosclerosis, obesity, and tooth decay were rare to unknown.

In stark contrast, for the wealthy and privileged—the royalty, the aristocrats, the high priests, the kings and queens and their court—feasts were everyday occurrences. Art of the past reflects the medical results: a fat king sitting on his throne with his foot swollen with painful gout.

What has changed over the past 4000 years? The progression of wealth for the masses has been slow until the about two centuries ago, and then, the industrial revolution and the harnessing of fossil fuels brought unprecedented riches to the ordinary person. Now, as if it were normal, every morning begins with a traditional Easter feast of eggs. For lunch and dinner people regularly eat turkey and ham, foods once reserved for Thanksgiving and Christmas. Topping off all this culinary excess are daily birthday parties, with cake and ice cream. Only the number of people who can live like royalty has changed over time. The relationships of food, health, and disease remain the same. There is no Egyptian mummy diet paradox—rich foods always have, and always will, make people sick.



Featured Recipes

I have spent the last couple of weeks editing recipes from The McDougall Health-Supporting Cookbooks, Volume 1 & 2 for the App that will soon be available with over 1000 recipes organized in an easy to use format. It has been a trip down memory lane for me; remembering old favorite recipes from 25 years ago, our life in Hawaii, cooking for young children, and cooking without some of the healthy convenience products that are available these days. I will be including some of our old favorites here in the newsletter over the next several months. I hope you enjoy them as much as we do.

Summertime Chowder

We really enjoy this soup in the summer when fresh corn and tomatoes are in season. Using the fresh corn and pulp gives this a delicious boost of flavor.

Servings: 6-8

Preparation Time: 30 minutes

Cooking Time: 45 minutes

- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 2 stalks celery, thinly sliced
- 2 carrots, thinly sliced
- 2 potatoes, peeled and diced
- 4 ears corn on the cob
- 3 ½ cups water
- 3 tablespoons soy sauce
- 2 teaspoons basil
- ½ teaspoon white pepper
- 3 tomatoes, seeded and chopped
- 3 cups rice, soy or nut milk
- Chopped parsley or alfalfa sprouts for garnish

In a large soup pot, sauté onion, garlic, celery, and carrot in ½ cup of the water for about 10 minutes. While this is cooking, remove corn from cob using a sharp knife. With the back of the knife, scrape cob to extract creamy pulp. Reserve corn and pulp. (Should be

about 2 cups.) Add the remaining 3 cups water, potatoes, and seasonings to soup pot. Bring to a boil. Add corn and pulp. Mix in well, reduce heat, cover and cook about 15 minutes. Then add tomatoes to the soup pot. Cook an additional 10-15 minutes, then add 3 cups acceptable milk, heat through and serve at once. Garnish with chopped parsley or alfalfa sprouts, if desired.

HELPFUL HINTS: Tomatoes are added later in the cooking to prevent them from getting too mushy. Frozen corn could be used in place of fresh corn, if desired. Use about 2 cups. The white pepper makes this a very spicy soup. Reduce to ¼ teaspoon to make it less spicy.

Chinese Hot Salad

I used to make this often when we lived in Hawaii. Every time we eat it now, it reminds me of the islands.

Servings: 6

Preparation Time: 20 minutes

Cooking Time: 10 minutes

1 onion, sliced
1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger root
3 cloves garlic, crushed
2 tablespoons soy sauce
2 stalks celery, thickly sliced
1 green pepper, cut into strips
2 cups bean sprouts
1 cup Chinese pea pods
½ cucumber, peeled and cut into strips
6 lettuce leaves, coarsely chopped
1 tablespoon lemon juice

In a wok or large pan, sauté onion, ginger, and garlic in 2 tablespoons water for 1 minute. Add 1 tablespoon soy sauce, and the celery, green peppers, pea pods, and bean sprouts. Cook and stir over medium-high heat for 6 minutes. Add the remaining soy sauce, the cucumber, and the lettuce. Continue to cook 3 minutes longer. Sprinkle with lemon juice. Mix well. Serve hot.

Mediterranean Mushrooms

I usually make this for an appetizer and keep it in the refrigerator for a refreshing snack during the day.

Servings: 6-8

Preparation Time: 25 minutes

Cooking Time: 25 minutes

2 pounds mushrooms
¾ cup water
1 large onion, sliced
1 leek, sliced
2 carrots, sliced
2 celery stalks, sliced
2 cloves garlic, crushed

3 tomatoes, cut into wedges
1 cup white wine (or apple juice)
1 tablespoon parsley flakes
1 tablespoon thyme leaves
1 bay leaf
freshly ground pepper (optional)
2 tablespoons arrowroot or cornstarch

Prepare mushrooms by cleaning and removing stems. Leave whole if they are small, otherwise cut in half. Set aside. In a large pot, sauté the onion, leek, carrots, celery, and garlic in ½ cup of the water for 10 minutes. Stir in wine, tomatoes, and seasonings. Bring to a boil, lower heat, and add prepared mushrooms. Simmer over medium-low heat for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Mix arrowroot or cornstarch with remaining ¼ cup water. Slowly add to mushroom mixture while stirring. Cook and stir until thickened. Serve over rice or other whole grains. Also goes well with pasta. This dish is also every good cold as an appetizer.

HELPFUL HINTS: Save the stems of the mushrooms and chop for your next batch of spaghetti sauce. Freeze until ready to use. Save some preparation time by preparing the mushrooms while the other vegetables are cooking.

Bryani

This is an Indian flavored rice dish. It will serve 2 people as a main dish and it is especially good with some Sriracha hot sauce over the top.

Servings: 4

Preparation Time: 20 minutes

Cooking Time: 60 minutes

1 onion, chopped
2 cloves garlic, crushed
2 ½ teaspoons curry powder
¾ teaspoon cinnamon
¼ teaspoon cloves
2 ¾ cups water
2 carrots, thinly sliced
½ cauliflower, broken into florets
½ cup raisins
1 cup uncooked brown rice
1 cup peas, fresh or frozen
1 tomato, chopped

In a large pan, cook onions and garlic in ¼ cup of the water for 5 minutes. Add curry powder, cinnamon, and cloves, cook 2 minutes. Add the remaining water, carrots, cauliflower, raisins, and rice. Bring to a boil. Cover, reduce heat, and simmer about 40 minutes. Stir in peas and tomatoes. Cook an additional 15 minutes. Serve hot.

Curried Chapati Roll Ups

I served this at many dinner parties and potlucks when we lived in Hawaii and it was always a favorite. Garam masala spice mixture is sold in many Asian markets or specialty spice shops, such as Penzeys.

Servings: 10-12

Preparation Time: 60 minutes

Cooking Time: 45 minutes (need cooked rice)

Sauce:

2 onions, chopped

2 cloves garlic, crushed

1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger root

1 teaspoon turmeric

2 ½ teaspoons garam masala

1 cup water

1 (28 ounces) can tomatoes, pureed

1 tablespoon low sodium soy sauce

1 tablespoon lemon juice

Filling:

1 onion, chopped

1 bunch green onions, chopped

½ pound mushrooms, sliced

2 cups chopped cauliflower

1 cup water

2 teaspoons garam masala

5 cups cooked rice

12 whole wheat chapatis (flour tortillas)

Fresh cilantro or parsley for garnish

Prepare the sauce first. Place the onions, garlic and ginger in a saucepan with ¼ cup of the water. Sauté for 5 minutes. Add the turmeric and garam masala. Mix well and let cook for 10 minutes. Then add the tomatoes and remaining water, reduce heat and simmer for 30 minutes to blend flavors. Add soy sauce and lemon juice. Mix and remove from heat. While the sauce is cooking, prepare the filling. Place the onions in a large pot with ¼ cup water. Sauté for 5 minutes. Add the mushrooms and cauliflower and remaining water. Add the garam masala, mix well and allow to cook about 15 minutes until cauliflower is tender. Add the cooked rice, mix well and remove from heat.

To assemble rolls: on each chapati put a line of rice mixture down the center (about 2/3 cup or so) roll up chapati and place seam side down in large non-stick baking dish to which 1 cup of the sauce has been spooned over the bottom. Repeat until all chapatis and the rice mixture are used. Spoon the remaining sauce over the chapati rolls. Cover and bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes. Sprinkle with chopped fresh cilantro or parsley before serving, if desired.

HELPFUL HINTS: Whole wheat chapatis are the same as whole wheat flour tortillas. There are several brands made without added oil, Ezekiel probably being the easiest to find. Look for them in your natural food store; sometimes they are found in the frozen food area. This is a good dish to prepare ahead of time and then do the baking just before dinner. This freezes well, so you may want to fill 2 baking dishes, freezing one for later use before the final baking.

Cathy Fisher— Guest Chef >>



Guest Chef: Cathy Fisher

Cathy Fisher has worked for the McDougall Program since 2006, and in 2010 began teaching cooking classes for the 10-Day Programs. Cathy also teaches cooking classes at True North Health Center in Santa Rosa. Her recipes call for primarily whole-foods ingredients and a few simply packaged items (i.e., canned beans and tomatoes, frozen vegetables, corn tortillas). In addition to avoiding all animal foods and ingredients, Cathy's recipes also avoid the use of any added oils, salt, or refined flour or sugar. Cathy enjoys the challenge of giving traditional and familiar dishes a "healthy makeover," but she says, "They not only have to be good for you, they have to be full of flavor and pretty easy to make." To view more of Cathy's recipes, visit

www.StraightUpFood.com/blog

Potato Scramble

While many vegan scrambles use tofu (instead of eggs), this recipe uses potatoes, along with navy beans, mushrooms, tomatoes and collard greens. Since there is no oil in this dish, the potatoes are steamed then put under the broiler to make them a little crisp. Top with homemade, salt-free ketchup or lemon-tahini sauce (see recipes below).

- 5-6 medium Yukon Gold potatoes
- ¼ cup water (and as needed for sautéing)
- 1 bell pepper, diced
- 1 yellow or red onion, diced
- 6 white or cremini mushrooms, sliced
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon paprika
- 1 can low- or no-sodium navy beans
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes, sliced in half
- 4 collard green leaves, sliced in thin strips
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh herbs, such as thyme or oregano (optional)



1. Cut potatoes into medium-size chunks and steam for 10 minutes until still firm but not hard. Turn oven broiler on to "hi." When potatoes finish steaming, place them on a non-stick baking sheet and broil for 5-10 minutes until they begin to brown (be careful not to over-broil them; I set my timer for 5 minutes and then check on them).
2. In a large skillet sauté the bell pepper, onion and mushrooms with the spices on medium-high in a quarter cup of water for 5 minutes (let the onions stick to the bottom of the pan only briefly so that they will caramelize a little and release their flavor before adding more water)
3. Add to the sautéed vegetables: the beans, tomatoes and collard greens (and fresh herbs if using) and cook for about 5 minutes more until the collards have wilted and softened; toss in the cooked/broiled potatoes. Serve immediately. May be served with salt-free ketchup or lemon-tahini sauce (see below).

Notes: Any type of edible mushroom, greens, beans or fresh herbs (such as parsley, rosemary, oregano, thyme, cilantro) may be used. / Yams or sweet potatoes may be substituted for half of the Yukon potatoes. / This also tastes great in warm corn tortillas.

Preparation: 15 minutes; cooking: 30 minutes; serves: 4

Salt-free Ketchup

- ½ cup water
- 7 oz. no-salt tomato paste (Bionature makes a no-salt tomato paste)

- ½ of an apple, cored, with or without skin
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar
- ¼ teaspoon dried oregano
- ¼ teaspoon granulated garlic

Combine all ingredients in a blender or Vitamix until smooth.

Lemon-tahini Sauce

- ¼ cup water
- ¼ cup tahini (or 3 tablespoons hulled sesame seeds)
- 3 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon lemon zest (optional)
- 1/8 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/8 teaspoon cumin

Combine all ingredients in a blender or Vitamix until smooth. Add a bit more water as needed to thin.

Tu-no Salad Wraps

Chickpeas—aka garbanzo beans—are a perfect plant-based substitute for canned tuna when it comes to creating a healthier version of tuna salad. For this recipe, the Tu-no salad is wrapped in warm corn tortillas and steamed collard leaves.

- 2 15-oz. cans chickpeas/garbanzo beans

- 4 ribs celery, diced
- ½ red onion, diced
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil
- ¼ cup curly or Italian parsley, chopped
- 1 avocado, small diced (optional)

- ½ cup water
- ½ cup raw, plain cashews
- 3 tablespoons lemon juice
- 2 teaspoons apple cider or rice vinegar
- 1 tablespoon prepared/wet mustard
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder

- 1 bunch collard greens
- 1 package corn tortillas



1. Place the drained chickpeas into the bowl of your food processor and pulse briefly, just until beans are broken up and sticking together slightly. Scrape this into a large bowl and toss with the celery, onion, basil, parsley and avocado.
2. Blend the dressing ingredients (water, cashews, lemon juice, vinegar, mustard and garlic powder) in a high-speed blender until smooth. Add this to the bowl of garbanzos and vegetables, and mix thoroughly. Serve in corn tortillas or wrapped in collard green leaves. (To prepare leaves: after washing the leaves and trimming the thick stem end, place each leaf in almost-boiling water for 1 minute to soften; remove and pat dry before filling and wrapping. Tuck or trim ends, then cut in half.

Notes: For a salt-free mustard, look for Westbrae Natural brand. / For salt-free canned beans, look for Eden brand. / Look for corn tortillas that are made with only corn, water and lime as their ingredients.

Preparation: 15 minutes; cooking: just a few minutes for the collard leaves; serves: 6

Hoppin' John with Avocado-cucumber Dressing

Hoppin' John is a southern U.S. dish adopted from West African culture. Black-eyed peas are the trademark ingredient of this dish, which is traditionally eaten on January 1st to bring good luck in the New Year; but I like to eat it throughout the year. This version uses fennel and mushrooms, topped off with a little avocado dressing.

½ cup water

1 medium onion or shallot, chopped

1 bell pepper, seeded and diced

2 ribs celery or 1 fennel bulb, diced

6 mushrooms, diced

1 clove fresh garlic, minced (or ½ teaspoon dried)

1 teaspoon dried thyme

1 teaspoon dried basil

1 teaspoon cumin

2 15-oz. cans black-eyed peas, rinsed

2 scallions (green onions), chopped

½ cup chopped parsley

1 small bunch greens (collards, chard, kale), julienned

1. Using water as needed, sauté the onion, bell pepper, celery or fennel, and mushrooms on medium-high for a few minutes until soft. Add the garlic, thyme, basil and cumin, and sauté another minute.

2. Mix in the black-eyed peas, scallions, parsley and greens, and cook about 5 minutes until the greens are softened. Serve as is, topped with Avocado-Cucumber dressing (below), and/or over brown rice.

Preparation: about 20 minutes; cooking time: 10 minutes; serves: 4

Avocado-cucumber Dressing

2/3 cup water

2 teaspoons lemon juice or apple cider vinegar

1 avocado, diced

½ teaspoon garlic powder

½ cucumber (with seeds), diced

½ cup raw spinach (or other greens), chopped (optional)

1 scallion (green onion), chopped

Combine all ingredients in a blender until smooth. Add water as needed to thin to desired consistency.



Oatmeal-raisin Cookies

These are your traditional oatmeal-raisin cookies, but without eggs, dairy, oil, salt, refined flour or sugar. Instead, this recipe uses oats, flax seeds, cashews, bananas and dates.

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup water

6 medjool dates, pitted

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup raw cashews or pecans

1 cup rolled oats

2 cups rolled oats, ground into flour (see note below)

3 tablespoons flax seeds, ground

$\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon baking soda

1 teaspoon baking powder

1 teaspoon cinnamon

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon nutmeg

4 tablespoons lemon juice

3 teaspoons lemon zest

$\frac{1}{2}$ ripe banana, mashed with a fork

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup raisins

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup roughly chopped walnuts (optional)



1. Preheat oven to 350. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper (or use a non-stick cookie sheet) and set aside. Place the pitted dates and cashews in a bowl with the $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of water and soak for 30 minutes.

2. While the dates and nuts are soaking, combine all of the dry ingredients (whole oats, ground oats, flax, baking soda, baking powder, cinnamon and nutmeg) in a large bowl and mix thoroughly with a fork. In another bowl, combine wet ingredients (lemon juice, zest, banana and vanilla). Blend the soaked dates, cashews and their water in a high-speed blender until smooth; add this mixture to the bowl of wet ingredients, and combine. Add the bowl of wet ingredients to the bowl of dry, and mix thoroughly, adding in the raisins and walnuts last (add a little water as needed if dough is too dry).

3. Using a one-tablespoon measure, place a scoop of cookie dough on the baking sheet and press down gently a couple times with a fork. Bake for 15-18 minutes on the middle rack, until cookies are lightly browned on the bottom and around the edges. Remove from oven and let sit for 5 minutes before transferring to a cooling rack.

Notes: Regular, whole rolled oats work best (as opposed to quick or instant oats). / A Vitamix or Tribest Personal Blender both work well to blend the nuts and dates, and grind oats into flour. / If you've never used fresh nutmeg, this would be a great opportunity to pick some up in the bulk section of Whole Foods and try it. / To zest lemons and nutmeg, use a fine grater, such as a Microplane. / These cookies are not overly sweet; if you'd like to add more sweetness, add two more dates to the recipe.

Preparation: 30 minutes; cooking time: 18 minutes; makes: 25-30 cookies