

CHOCOLATE CHERRY COCONUT BROWNIES

MAKES ABOUT 36 / 1 HOUR

Although you can use all-purpose wheat flour, gluten-free flour (in combination with coconut oil) makes these brownies more tender and luscious. Let chill overnight for a firmer, easier-to-cut brownie.

- 1/4 cup each dried sour cherries and orange liqueur, such as Grand Marnier
- 1/4 cup large unsweetened coconut flakes*
- 1 1/2 cups semisweet chocolate chips, divided
- 1/4 cup unrefined (virgin) coconut oil*
- 1/2 cup gluten-free flour, such as Cup4Cup or Bob's Red Mill
- 1/4 cup Dutch-process unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1/2 tsp. fine sea salt
- 1 cup turbinado sugar (raw cane sugar)
- 2 eggs
- 1 tsp. vanilla

Preheat oven to 350°. Oil a 9- by 9-in. baking pan and line bottom with a sheet of parchment paper large enough to come up 2 opposite ends of pan and hang over sides. Put cherries in a small bowl and pour in liqueur. Let soak 30 minutes. Meanwhile, toast coconut on a rimmed baking sheet until golden, 3 to 5 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a microwave-safe bowl, melt 3/4 cup chocolate chips with the coconut oil, heating in 20-second bursts and then stirring, until chocolate is 3/4 melted. Stir until melted, then cool slightly.

Whisk flour, cocoa powder, and salt together in a medium bowl. Add sugar, eggs, and vanilla to melted chocolate and whisk to mix. Whisk in flour mixture. Drain cherries (save liqueur for cocktails). Stir cherries and remaining 3/4 cup chocolate chips into batter.

Pour batter into prepared pan. Bake until a toothpick inserted in center comes out clean, 25 to 30 minutes. Let brownies cool (or chill), then lift out using parchment paper and cut into 1 1/2-in. squares. Arrange brownies on a serving tray and top with coconut flakes.

*Virgin coconut oil is cold-pressed, isn't hydrogenated, and has a clean, sweet taste. Find it, along with coconut flakes, at well-stocked grocery stores.

MAKE AHEAD 3 days, chilled airtight.

PER BROWNIE 129 Cal., 51% (66 Cal.) from fat; 1.3 g protein; 7.5 g fat (5.3 g sat.); 14 g carbo (1.3 g fiber); 31 mg sodium; 24 mg chol. GF/V

HOLIDAY SMOOTHIES

SERVES 10 / 15 MINUTES, PLUS 1 HOUR TO FREEZE

"I created this on the fly when I wanted something sweet and nondairy," says Ayesha. It's an excellent sub for eggnog.

- 4 bananas, peeled, sliced, and frozen
- 8 Medjool dates, pitted, coarsely chopped, and frozen
- 3 cups canned coconut milk, chilled
- About 1/2 tsp. freshly ground nutmeg

In a blender, whirl bananas, dates, coconut milk, and 1/2 tsp. nutmeg until bananas are smooth and dates are finely chopped. Pour into 10 chilled 4-oz. glasses and top each with a pinch of nutmeg.

PER SERVING 229 Cal., 58% (132 Cal.) from fat; 2.2 g protein; 15 g fat (13 g sat.); 27 g carbo (2.5 g fiber); 9.5 mg sodium; 0 mg chol.

CRANBERRY TEQUILA PUNCH

MAKES 12 CUPS (24 SERVINGS) / 20 MINUTES, PLUS 6 HOURS TO FREEZE ICE RING

"Tequila is just as versatile as popular spirits like gin and vodka," says Amanda, who created this pretty punch.

- 6 cups each chilled bottled apple juice and cranberry cocktail, divided
- 1 large orange, halved lengthwise, then thinly sliced crosswise
- 1 1/3 cups fresh cranberries, divided
- 2 cups gold (100% agave) or reposado (aged) tequila
- 1 cup orange-flavored liqueur, such as Grand Marnier or Cointreau

2 bottles sparkling wine, such as prosecco
10 to 12 fresh rosemary sprigs (4 in.)

1. Make ice ring: Pour 1 cup each apple and cranberry juice into an 8- to 9-in. bundt or ring mold. Add half of orange slices in a single layer and about 1/3 of cranberries. Freeze until firm, at least 3 hours.
2. Set aside 24 to 36 cranberries for garnish. Pour remaining berries into mold, then add remaining orange slices. Fill with another 1 cup each apple and cranberry juices. Freeze until frozen solid, at least 3 hours more.
3. Just before serving, mix remaining 4 cups of each juice with tequila, orange liqueur, and sparkling wine in a large bowl or pitcher. Remove mold from freezer and invert onto a plate. Run bottom of mold under warm water until it releases, a few seconds. Slide ice ring into a punch bowl fruit side up. Fill bowl with punch.
4. To serve, skewer each reserved cranberry with a toothpick to make a hole. Strip 2/3 of leaves from bottom of rosemary sprigs, then slide 2 or 3 cranberries onto each sprig. Fill glasses with punch and set a sprig in or across each glass.

MAKE AHEAD Ice ring, up to 1 week.

PER 1/2-CUP SERVING 180 Cal., 0.3% (0.6 Cal.) from fat; 0 g protein; 0.1 g fat (0.01 g sat.); 19 g carbo (0 g fiber); 4 mg sodium; 0 mg chol.

WINE PICKS

France's Rhône Valley grapes embrace this menu's big flavors, says *Sunset* wine editor Sara Schneider. Her top whites for the party: **Kitá 2014 Camp 4 Vineyard "T'aya"** (Santa Ynez Valley; \$22) and **Tablas Creek 2015 "Patelin de Tablas Blanc"** (Paso Robles; \$25). For reds, she suggests **Halter Ranch 2014 "CDP"** (Adelaida District, Paso Robles; \$32) and **Lasseter Family 2013 "Chemin De Fer"** (Sonoma Valley; \$56). 🍷