



Healthy Desserts and Sweet Snack Ideas from Plant-Based Pros

By Courtney Davison
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Got a sweet tooth? You're not alone. The average American consumes around 17 teaspoons worth of added sugar every day, according to the [American Heart Association](#)—more than double and triple the recommended maximums for men and women, respectively. Consuming a lot of added sugars—which are devoid of nutrients but high in calories—has been linked to [obesity](#) and [chronic diseases](#). Fortunately, eating well doesn't mean cutting out sugar altogether. We asked plant-based chefs, athletes, and other pros what they reach for when they're craving a treat. The next time you've got a hankering, soothe your sweet tooth with one of these naturally sweet snacks, which will power you up without the crash that comes after refined-sugar-packed, high-fat desserts.

Air-Fried Fruit Crumble

This [air-fryer](#) dessert idea comes courtesy of **Vicki Brett-Gach**, author of *The Plant-Based for Life Cookbook* and founder of [Ann Arbor Vegan Kitchen](#): “You can do this with apple, pear, or pineapple,” Brett-Gach says. “For one serving, I use one apple or one pear, chopped, or $\frac{3}{4}$ cup pineapple chunks. Sprinkle the fruit with ground cinnamon or apple pie spice. Air-fry for 10 to 12 minutes at 375°F. Then I like to top it with a

handful of frozen mixed berries (which thaw on the warm fruit almost on contact) and a spoonful of homemade (no-oil-added) granola for a hot and cold, soft and crispy treat.”

Chickpea Cookie Dough

Few things are more decadent and nostalgic than eating a spoonful of cookie dough, so we are eternally grateful to **Carleigh Bodrug** for coming up with a healthy way to recreate the experience. “My sweet obsession is none other than chickpea cookie dough,” says Bodrug, the author of [PlantYou Scrappy Cooking](#). “I have a few spoonfuls of it after dinner and it feels like eating cookie dough—but better. To make it, drain and rinse a can of chickpeas, and in a food processor, combine the chickpeas with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of your favorite nut butter, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of pure maple syrup, a tablespoon of oats, and 1 teaspoon vanilla extract. Process until you achieve a cookie-dough consistency. Stir in dark chocolate chips, and store in the fridge for up to four days.”

Rip's Big Dessert Bowl

“I've got a mammoth sweet tooth,” says **Rip Esselstyn**, founder of PLANTSTRONG and author of *The Engine 2 Diet*. “This is my go-to after-dinner dessert almost every night,” he says. “I take a quarter cup of Rip's Big Bowl Cereal. Then I heat up $\frac{1}{2}$ cup to 1 cup chopped frozen mango (I like Trader Joe's brand) in the microwave 45 to 60 seconds. I put the warm mango on top of the cereal, then I add sliced banana, and some plant milk.”

Choco-Tofu Mousse

“I absolutely adore chocolate,” says **Esselstyn**. “If I need a chocolate fix, I like to whip up some mousse: Just toss 16 ounces of silken tofu with $\frac{1}{3}$ cup maple syrup, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup unsweetened cocoa powder, and 1 teaspoon vanilla extract into a blender. Blend until smooth.”

(continued)

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Pancakes

Esselstyn's wholesome dessert menu also includes pancakes. "On the weekends I'll make 30 or 40 whole grain pancakes, sprinkling a handful of vegan chocolate chips in the batter," Esselstyn says. "Then I freeze them. During the week, when I'm craving something sweet, I just throw a frozen pancake in the toaster oven for a few minutes, and it's ready to go. You don't even need maple syrup. Eat it like a cookie!"

Frozen Bananas

Love ice pops and ice cream bars? Try this ingeniously simple idea from **Alona Pulde, M.D., and Matthew Lederman, M.D.**, authors of *The Forks Over Knives Plan* and founders of [WeHeal.health](#): "We always keep some frozen bananas in the freezer. Let them get really ripe; the riper they get the better they'll taste. Then peel them and freeze them in a freezer-safe bag. When you want a sweet snack, just wrap one in a paper towel and eat it like a regular banana."

Date-Nut Balls

When they want a more decadent treat, **Lederman and Pulde** have homemade date-nut balls: "Blend 16 ounces of pitted dates, 12 ounces of nuts, and 1 cup of nut butter. Roll the mixture into bite-size balls. Freeze them on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Once they're frozen, put them in a freezer-safe bag so they're ready to go."

Frozen Cherries with Chocolate Chips

Kiki Nelson, the author of *Plantifully Simple* and *Plantifully Lean* cookbooks, turns to nature's candy. "When I'm craving something sweet, I reach for some fruit, and I especially love frozen cherries, with a sprinkling or two of dairy-free chocolate chips," says Nelson. "Having that little bit of chocolate feels decadent enough to satisfy my sweet tooth."

Creamy Oatmeal Raisin Bowl

If you're a fan of oatmeal raisin cookies, try this simply delicious idea from **Katie Simmons**, Chicago-based personal chef and founder of Plants Rule: Stir together ½ cup rolled oats, 1 cup unsweetened almond milk, 2

chopped pitted dates, 2 tablespoons of raisins, and a dash of cinnamon in a bowl. Microwave 90 seconds, stir. Microwave 30 more seconds, stir again, and repeat until the oatmeal is creamy. Let cool slightly before eating.

Raspberry Bars

These mouthwatering raspberry bars from the **Jaroudi family** are a cinch to make and a delight to eat: In a medium saucepan combine 12 ounces frozen or fresh raspberries and 2 tablespoons of [date paste](#). Cook over medium, stirring often, until mixture comes to a simmer and cooks down (about 3 minutes). Turn off heat. Stir in 2 tablespoons of chia seeds and 1 teaspoon each of lemon juice and lemon zest until well combined. Let cool to thicken. Line a loaf pan with parchment paper. Add 2 large roasted and mashed Japanese sweet potatoes to bottom of loaf pan. Pour raspberry mixture over top. Freeze for a more solid consistency or refrigerate for a softer consistency.

Nice Cream with Date Drizzle

Competitive weightlifter and CrossFit athlete **Briana Jones**, who competed in the 2024 Mr. America Fitness Throwdown as part of the [Vegan Strong Plantbuilt team](#), opts for cool desserts that help her recharge after workouts. "For a refreshing sweet treat, I like to toss two or three frozen bananas in a high-speed blender with a spoonful of Date Paste and blend until creamy."

Mango Chia Seed Pudding

Another favorite of **Jones'** is Mango Chia Seed Pudding. "This is a go-to no-bake treat," says Jones. "Put mango chunks in a blender with some plant-based milk and blend until creamy. Pour the mixture over chia seeds. Let set for an hour. Then enjoy!"