

Stuffed Medjool dates

A naturally sweet little treat, made from whole foods.

Sweet, chewy and satisfying - with a crunchy or creamy centre, and delicious with or without dark chocolate. A whole-food treat that is easy to make and lovely to share.

MAKES 12 · PREP 10 MINS · CHILL 15-20 MINS IF COATING IN CHOCOLATE

Ingredients

Ingredient	Amount
Medjool dates	12 (about 24 g edible flesh each)
Filling option 1: whole almonds	24-36 (2-3 per date)
Filling option 2: smooth or crunchy peanut butter (ideally 100% nuts)	60 g (1 level tsp per date)
Optional: dark chocolate (around 70% cocoa solids)	60 g (about 5 g per date)
Optional: flaky sea salt or crushed nuts	A small pinch

How to make them

1

Remove the stones

Make a slit along one side of each date and take out the stone, keeping the date in one piece.

2

Fill

Fill each date with two or three whole almonds or one level teaspoon of peanut butter. Gently press closed.

3

Melt the chocolate (optional)

Melt the dark chocolate in short bursts in the microwave, stirring often, or in a bowl over a pan of gently simmering water.

4

Dip and chill

Dip or drizzle each stuffed date with chocolate. Place on baking paper and chill for 15-20 minutes until set. Enjoy!

TRY THIS

Doctor Wendy's tip. Make a small batch and keep it in the fridge for an easy, satisfying sweet treat. A sprinkle of flaky sea salt is lovely with the dark chocolate.

Nutrition at a glance - per stuffed date

Filling	No chocolate	With 5 g dark chocolate	Carbs*	Fibre*
2-3 whole almonds	~81-88 kcal	~111-118 kcal	~20 g	~2.5 g
5 g peanut butter	~97 kcal	~127 kcal	~20 g	~2.5 g

**With chocolate. Most of the carbohydrate is natural sugar from the date. Based on about 24 g edible date, 2-3 almonds (about 1.2 g each) or 5 g peanut butter, and optional 5 g 70% dark chocolate. Rounded estimates using standard food-label values - date sizes and brands vary.*

Why these make a better kind of treat

Sweet treats are part of life, and there is no need to feel guilty about enjoying them. These ones bring something extra to the table.

Medjool dates	Sweetness with benefits. Dates provide fibre, potassium, magnesium and natural plant compounds called polyphenols. Despite tasting so sweet, studies show dates have a low-to-medium glycaemic index, partly thanks to their fibre. They are still rich in natural sugar, so they are best enjoyed as a treat.
Almonds and peanuts	Good for your heart. Large studies link eating a small handful of nuts most days - peanuts included - with a lower risk of heart disease and a longer life, and trials show almonds help lower LDL ("bad") cholesterol. Nuts also bring healthy unsaturated fats, protein, vitamin E and magnesium.
Built-in balance	Sweet meets savoury. Pairing the natural sugar in the date with the fat, protein and fibre in the nuts slows how quickly that sugar is absorbed - a gentler rise in blood sugar than eating the date on its own, and a more satisfying bite.
A whole-food swap	More than just sugar. Choosing a homemade treat made from whole foods, instead of shop-bought sweets or biscuits, means you get fibre, healthy fats and nutrients alongside the sweetness.

Living with insulin resistance or type 2 diabetes?

You can still enjoy these. Each stuffed date contains around 20 g of carbohydrate, mostly natural sugar, so a little goes a long way.

- Enjoy one as a treat and savour it slowly.
- Always fill them - the nuts help soften the rise in blood sugar.
- Have them at the end of a meal rather than on an empty stomach. Eating sweet foods after your meal leads to a gentler rise.
- Choose whole almonds and a higher-cocoa chocolate (such as 85%) for less sugar.
- Go for a short walk afterwards - gentle movement helps steady your blood sugar.

If you take insulin and count carbohydrates, use the figures in the nutrition table. Speak to your healthcare team before making big changes to what you eat.

Did you know? Whole nuts and nut butter are not quite the same

A fascinating example of how the structure of food affects digestion - not just the number printed on the label. In a small controlled study of 18 adults, researchers measured how much energy people actually got from different forms of almonds:

Almond form	Energy actually absorbed (per gram)
Whole raw almonds	4.42 kcal
Whole roasted almonds	4.86 kcal
Chopped roasted almonds	5.04 kcal
Almond butter	6.53 kcal

Why? Some fat stays trapped inside the intact plant cell walls of whole almonds and passes through without being fully absorbed. Grinding nuts into butter breaks down more of those walls, making the fat easier to absorb. This study used almonds, so the exact numbers may not apply to peanuts or other nut butters.

The practical message. Both whole nuts and nut butters can be part of a heart-friendly way of eating. Choose the texture you enjoy - whole almonds add a lovely crunch. These differences are not a reason to fear peanut butter or to count every calorie.

A word about the dark chocolate

Cocoa contains flavanols, which are being studied for their effects on blood vessels and blood pressure. Short-term trials show a small drop in blood pressure, and a large US trial of cocoa flavanol supplements did not significantly reduce heart attacks and strokes overall. The amount of flavanols in chocolate also varies widely with processing - 70% cocoa does not guarantee a meaningful dose.

So a chocolate-coated date will not lower your blood pressure or prevent heart disease on its own - and dark chocolate still contains sugar and saturated fat. Choose a small amount for taste and enjoyment. The real health benefits come from your overall way of eating.

Storing and sharing

Store in a covered container in the fridge for up to 5 days, or freeze for up to 2 months for best quality. Let frozen dates soften for a few minutes before eating.

A note from Doctor Wendy

Enjoying food is part of living well. Treats do not need to be "earned" or cut out completely - choosing ones made from whole foods, and savouring them, is a lovely way to look after yourself.

Small, enjoyable steps towards eating well add up. Progress, not perfection.

Important

- **Allergens:** contains nuts or peanuts, depending on your filling. Check chocolate labels for milk and soya.
- **Young children:** whole nuts are a choking hazard and are not suitable for children under 5. Always check the stone has been removed, and cut dates into small pieces for young children.
- **Look after your teeth:** dates are sticky, so enjoy them with or after a meal and have a drink of water afterwards.

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EVIDENCE BASE

*Gebauer SK et al. Food Funct 2016;7:4231-8 (food structure and the energy absorbed from almonds)
Aune D et al. BMC Med 2016;14:207 (nut intake, heart disease and mortality - meta-analysis)
Musa-Veloso K et al. J Nutr Sci 2016;5:e34 (almonds and LDL cholesterol - meta-analysis)
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Ried K et al. Cochrane Database Syst Rev 2017;CD008893 (cocoa and blood pressure)
Sesso HD et al. Am J Clin Nutr 2022;115:1490-1500 (COSMOS - cocoa flavanols and cardiovascular events)
British Heart Foundation - Dark chocolate: is it healthy?; NHS guidance on choking hazards and whole nuts*

DISCLOSURES

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