



THE HEALTHY
MATCHA COOKBOOK




Green Tea-Inspired Meals, Snacks, Drinks, and Desserts



MIRYAM QUINN DOBLAS, MS, RD
CREATOR OF EATGOOD4LIFE



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Firstly, I would love to dedicate this book to my mother, who instilled in me the greatest work ethic and perseverance to never give up—to always have a positive attitude and to believe that anything is possible.

To my two “little cookies,” as I referred to them ever since they were little, Miqueas and Mikaela, who are the loves of my life, my inspiration, and who make me better each day.

To my readers, without your support and interest in becoming a healthier you, bringing you creative and healthier recipes wouldn't be as easy. Thanks for following along.

INTRODUCTION: A BIT ABOUT ME AND MATCHA

Growing up in Spain, I was able to experience the greatest gifts this culture has to offer—especially when it came to food. Eating the Mediterranean diet and being introduced to quality ingredients and certain foods from a very young age is what molded my passion for great food as I grew older.

Since I was a child, I always loved being around the kitchen. I loved cooking and baking and always dreamed of having my own restaurant and bakery someday. Collecting cookbooks as well as recipes from cooking magazines, which I still have, was one of the things I remembered doing most when I was younger.

I also loved menu planning and going grocery shopping with my mom. Browsing the many grocery aisles and selecting ingredients to cook and bake with, talking about recipes with my older aunts, and recording new recipes I wanted to experiment with were things I enjoyed doing. Anything related to food was comforting to me.

Oftentimes as a teenager, friends and family would ask me to bake and cook for them. There was nothing that made me happier than being around food, so cooking and baking for loved ones was simply a pleasure. Since my mom worked full time while I was growing up, I was also frequently left to prepare meals for my siblings. Of course I never minded; I never considered it a chore since that is what I loved to do.

Early on, I learned and appreciated that cooking and baking from scratch using wholesome ingredients is what made food taste great and what made me feel my best. Experimenting with different flavors, textures, and ingredients is what kept me curious in the kitchen. To this date, I have never lost interest there is nothing I enjoy more than developing healthy recipes for me and my family, and I have high hopes to be able to pass that interest and enthusiasm along to my kids.

Today, most of us know that a healthy diet plays a huge role in our well-being. When leading a healthy lifestyle, we all know that a typical balanced diet with plenty of fruit and vegetables, complex carbohydrates, healthy fats, low intake of sugars and salt, as well as consuming lean protein is most important. I believe these, coupled with having the right mindset and exercising regularly, is the secret to a good, long, quality life. Our bodies are complex machines that, without good care and the right tools, will break down and can't be used to their fullest potential.

In this cookbook, I showcase sweet and savory recipes using one of the most ancient and most powerful healthy ingredients—matcha powder. If you incorporate superfoods into your diet on a regular basis but have never thought of matcha powder, now is a great time to start using it. Take advantage of the many healthy properties this ingredient has to offer!

The benefits of matcha have been well documented. Matcha is a concentrated, powerful antioxidant form of green tea that has a large number of components that are beneficial to human health. Even if you are already following a healthy lifestyle, incorporating matcha into your diet can still benefit you.

Throughout the years, I have made it a point to introduce superfoods into my cooking and baking. Since discovering matcha's potent, healthy properties, I have wanted to incorporate it into most of my meals in any way I can. Today, through this book, I can share with you some of my most valuable health matcha recipes, which I hope you enjoy.

History of Green Tea

Tea is a beverage with more than five thousand years of history, said to be discovered around 2500 BC. Many believe the first seeds to be imported to Japan came from Zen Monk Eisai in 1191 AD. Around that time, cultivation of tea began. Thanks to Zen Monk Eisai, matcha later become Japan's most treasured kind of green tea, as well as the tea of choice for the traditional Japanese tea ceremony. Drinking tea in Japan is much more than *just drinking tea*: the tea ceremony, called Chado, is a spiritual experience in which harmony, respect, purity, and tranquility are represented. It is a very well-respected ceremony of which Japanese people are quite proud.

Many also believed that Buddhist monks of ancient times helped tea break into the common market. Buddhist monks produced natural remedies from different plants and, since tea was known to be medicinal, it was natural for Buddhist monks to powder the green tea leaf as they would other traditional Chinese medicines. This may have been how matcha was born.

In Japanese *cha* means “tea,” and *ma* means “powder,” thus *matcha* translates to “powdered green tea.” Because the entire leaf is ingested in powder form, it is the most potent green tea in the world. The lack of processing results in extremely high nutrient levels. Matcha is the healthiest form of tea.

Today, Japan only exports a very small amount of its production—about 4 percent of its precious matcha. Because of its great consumption in Japan, and because very little makes it out of the country, you may have to pay higher prices for this wonderful powdered tea. Matcha is not only a highly treasured specialty green tea, but it's also used frequently in Japanese cooking and baking. Because there are different grades of matcha, you must know which are best to cook and bake with.

If you want to just drink matcha and make the classic green tea, highest quality matcha is most suitable. Highest quality matchas have a higher level of antioxidants and amino acids and are more expensive. For cooking and baking, other intermediate quality varieties that are characterized by a more astringent flavor are used. These are still very good; however, the flavor as well as nutrient content may be lower.

Matcha Basics

While matcha is predominantly used for drinks such as lattes, milkshakes, and ice drinks, you can—and should—use certain grades of matcha that will work in an array of different cooking and baking recipes.

The two most popular types of matcha are Usucha, or thin tea, which creates a lighter and slightly more bitter tea, and Koicha, or thick tea, which requires significantly more matcha than Usucha to make tea. Koicha is also made with more expensive matcha and produces a milder and sweeter tea than Usucha.

Depending on the leaves used and the way of cultivating matcha, prices may vary. The matchas milled using traditional granite stone wheels, and those with deeper greener colors (as well as softest texture) tend to be more expensive and highest in quality. Making sure the tea was grown and processed in Japan is also very important when obtaining good-quality matcha, so make sure you buy from trusted sources.

Matcha can also be produced in China, but Japanese matcha tends to be higher quality.

For drinks and no-bake sweet and savory recipes, use the highest quality matcha you can. The lower grades of matcha are typically more appropriate for cooking and baking. Good-quality drinking matcha powders will give you a bright green tint; however, while cooking, this tint may turn more of a distinct yellow/brownish.

A good rule of thumb is to buy matcha powder that is tightly sealed as well as kept from light, so look for and store containers in which matcha powder cannot be seen. Once the seal is broken and the matcha is exposed to air, it will begin to oxidize. Keep it in the refrigerator to slow this process. Once matcha oxidizes, it will have a distinctive hay-like smell and a dull brownish-green color. You shouldn't wait longer than four to six weeks to consume for maximum freshness and best taste.

Buying directly from a matcha grower or a specialized supplier will ensure best quality matcha. There are many reputable online sources today, and I've listed resources at the end of this cookbook. You can also buy matcha from a local tea shop or Asian grocery store but you run the risk of obtaining unfresh varieties that can produce undesired results.

When purchasing matcha, there are three different grades to consider.

Ceremonial grade is the highest grade. This type of matcha is best for drinking. It is not recommended to mix with any other foods, however, I like to use this type for most of my smoothies and drinks as well as no-bake desserts.

Premium grade is more of an everyday ingredient. It is still very good and easier to find. You can use it for both drinking and cooking.

Ingredient grade, or cooking matcha, is cheaper and is added as an ingredient to foods and beverages. Cooking matcha is blended to provide the color, aroma, and the flavor presence to withstand various processes of cooking. This grade has a stronger flavor to compete with the other flavors in foods and beverages. It is mixed with older tea leaves for this purpose.

When buying from a reputable source, the seller should be able to distinguish which matcha is better for cooking and baking and which one for just drinking. Make sure you ask questions if you are not sure the products you're considering are right for what you want to make.

Since matcha contains caffeine and it is both a stimulant and a relaxant, setting a limit to 200 milligrams is recommended. Just one cup of a matcha drink per day will allow you to feel the health benefits and improved mental alertness that matcha delivers. Doctors claim a mere 8 to 10 ounces of green tea a day is beneficial to your health.

Keep in mind that the caffeine content can vary slightly depending on the type and quality of matcha used. Koicha (thick matcha) is prepared using double the amount of matcha powder so it would have twice the caffeine. As a general rule of thumb, there are about 60 milligrams of caffeine per teaspoon of matcha; however, caffeine from matcha is absorbed into the system much slower than caffeine in coffee as L-theanine in matcha counteracts the stimulating properties of caffeine. Compared to drinking coffee you will experience a slower and steady release of caffeine by drinking matcha.

For perfect matcha drinks, follow these simple tips:

1. Store matcha powder in the fridge or freezer to keep it fresh. Before use, restore to room temperature.
2. Water should be hot but not boiling. If you have boiling water, allow it to cool a bit so your matcha will not taste bitter.
3. Bamboo tools and whisks will achieve the best results when mixing matcha.
4. If making iced tea, almond milk or creamer may be added.

Matcha Health Benefits

Matcha green tea is the highest quality powdered green tea available. After years of ongoing research, it has been concluded that green tea has a large amount of healthy attributes and several benefits for the human body. Because of this, we know that incorporating matcha powder into a healthy lifestyle can add longevity and aid in the fight against diseases.

Here's why:

Green tea contains four powerful flavonoid polyphenol compounds (antioxidants) known as *catechins*. Catechins are compounds that are unoxidized. Green tea contains about 30 percent catechins, whereas black tea contains only 4 percent of theaflavins. Both are powerful antioxidants, however, green tea is associated with more health benefits since it has more catechins.

These catechins in green tea are EC (epicatechin), ECG (epicatechin gallate), ECGC (Epigallocatechin gallate), and EGC (Epigallocatechin). Many studies have determined that matcha has 60 percent Epigallocatechin gallate. EGCG is tea's most abundant antioxidant catechin; it is one hundred times more potent than vitamin C, twenty-five times more potent than vitamin E, and may have therapeutic applications in the treatment of many disorders since it aids in the destruction of free radicals.

Even though EGCG is the focus of many scientific studies and has been associated with most of the newly discovered green tea benefits, there is also evidence that ECG is potent, as well.

We also know that matcha has about six times the amount of antioxidants of goji berries, sixty times that of spinach, and seventeen times the amount of blueberries. Catechins aren't found in any other foods.

There are many food items such as dark chocolate, green leafy vegetables, and some raw organic fruits that contain antioxidants; however, matcha has the highest level of antioxidant content compared to all of these foods.

Antioxidants help you fight disease and add to your longevity because they work against free radicals in the body. *Free radicals* are damaged cells that are unstable and can be problematic because they are missing a critical molecule. These free radicals often injure cells and damage DNA, which in turn can create disease by initiating mutations and uncontrolled cell growth, sometimes causing cancer.

Antioxidants are involved in the prevention of cellular damage; they block the process by neutralizing these free radicals. In doing so, the antioxidants themselves become oxidized. That is why there is a constant need to replenish our antioxidant resources and why antioxidants are so crucial to our health. Antioxidants will help you against aging, but most importantly, they will help you fight disease.

While there are several types of green tea in the market today, matcha powder is the one specially designed for cooking purposes. ~~Because matcha is ground into a fine powder, you end up ingesting the entire leaf.~~ It is the only tea leaf in the world that can be consumed in its entirety. This process allows you to obtain all of the polyphenols and health benefits of matcha.

As a rule, the lighter the green matcha varieties, the sweeter the taste, and the darker matcha the varieties, the more astringent they are. Matcha can be used both in savory cooking and in desserts. It is a very versatile ingredient that can even be incorporated without cooking it. In this cookbook, you will find both savory and sweet dishes that will help you incorporate this ancient, powerful ingredient into your diet.

Some top health benefits of consuming matcha green tea powder are:

1. It is packed with antioxidants

Out of all the antioxidants, EGCG is the most widely recognized for its cancer-fighting properties. Scientists have found that matcha green tea contains over one hundred times more EGCG than any other tea on the market. As a result, this is the most potent cancer-fighting ingredient in the market today. As mentioned before, EGCG and other catechins counteract the effects of free radicals and disease-causing agents from the likes of pollution, UV rays, radiation, and chemicals, which can lead to cell and DNA damage, causing mutations.

2. Fights against viruses and bacteria

The catechins in matcha green tea have been shown to have antibiotic properties. Green tea may keep the immune system prepared to fend off attacks from bacteria and other pathogens, which promotes overall health. In other words, it helps you enhance your immunity.

As I mentioned, matcha tea contains epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG), which is also effective in fighting against various bacterial, viral, and fungal infections. Through research, it has been suggested that EGCG binds to the lipid membrane and exerts inhibitory action against growth of various human pathogens such as influenza A virus, hepatitis B and C virus, herpes virus, adenovirus Staphylococcus aureus bacteria, and Candida albicans yeast. More research has also proposed that the nutrients in matcha may have the ability to inhibit the attacks of HIV on human T-cells.

3. Boosts metabolism and burns calories

Matcha powder has been found to be an energy booster that improves physical endurance in athletes. It goes as far as helping speed recovery in athletes who focus in high-intensity workouts as well as showing reverse cellular damage. Because matcha powder contains one of the highest level of catechins, there is a reason to assume that consuming matcha regularly can greatly aid in workout recovery as well as encourage strength at a cellular level.

Matcha is also known for its properties in boosting the metabolism and burning fat. Research has found that consuming green tea increases thermogenesis (the body's rate of burning calories). Matcha green tea can enhance both resting metabolic rate (amount of calories burned at rest) and fat burning.

4. Creates a sense of calm

L-theanine is also another component of matcha green tea powder. L-theanine is an amino acid with psychoactive properties, capable of inducing alpha wave activity in the brain, which induces relaxation.

without the inherent drowsiness or nervous energy caused by other downers such as coffee.

5. **May lower cholesterol and blood sugar**

Matcha powder is known for lowering bad cholesterol (LDL cholesterol) as well as improve insulin sensitivity in type-2 diabetes. Green tea polyphenols and polysaccharides are the components that are effective in lowering blood sugar. Polysaccharides in green tea possess the same ability to regulate blood sugar as insulin does.

If you are looking to lower your cholesterol, you should drink green tea in combination with avoiding high-cholesterol foods. While matcha powder is in no way a magic bullet, in combination with healthy lifestyle choices, this powerful ingredient can aid in lowering cholesterol as well as sugar.

6. **Powerful detoxifier**

Matcha is also a powerful detoxifier. Because matcha is grown in the shade, it is richer in chlorophyll than any other green tea. This chlorophyll content aids in the ability to clear the body of toxins and heavy metals, such as aluminum, lead, mercury, poisons, dioxins, and hormone disrupters. Matcha is a superior daily detox that de-acidifies the body, restores its natural pH balance, and cleans and purifies the blood.

7. **Other health benefits**

In addition to providing exceptional amounts of high antioxidant compounds such as catechins and polyphenols, matcha is also rich in vitamins (A, B-complex, C, E, and K). Matcha contains minerals such as manganese, potassium, calcium, and phosphorous, which are biological regulators. In addition, it is also rich in insoluble fiber and has practically no calories.

Ingredients to Use with Matcha

While eating healthy can be easier than you think, it always requires *some* planning. There are many different trends and opinions as to what is considered “eating healthy.” My philosophy has always been obtaining the highest quality ingredients as well as always cooking from scratch. It has always been a lifestyle choice of mine—I need to eat healthy to be able to feel my best. Cooking and baking myself allows me to control 100 percent what I feed myself and my family. Having control of my nutrition is what makes me happy.

Cooking and baking healthy also requires having a well-stocked pantry. While some people may complain of healthy food being expensive, there is no greater expense than the cost of healthcare. The way I look at it—by investing in good-quality ingredients up front, for the most part, you’ll prevent spending money later on doctors’ visits, co-pays, medication, and surgery deductibles. If you think food is more expensive, think again. There is no greater expense in the United States today than the growing population of ill people.



My ingredient list includes pantry essentials that I commonly use in my kitchen. These are ingredients I use mostly on a day-to-day basis.

Organic Items

In my professional and personal opinion, there is no question that organic is best when it comes to certain food products and items such as dairy, meat, poultry, and certain fruits and vegetables. Back in the day when there were no GMO products in the market, different strains of fertilizers, and a different array of chemicals lingering in our food supply, I probably wouldn't have cared to buy organic; however, today is a different story.

There are several food items that I always buy organic that are non-negotiable in my kitchen. While these items can cost more money, the difference between organic and non-organic counterparts is most times not as much as you may think. Thanks to the high demands of organic products today, prices have decreased a lot in recent years. However, if you cannot afford buying organic products, purchasing in-season produce will ensure fewer chemicals and pesticides in these foods.

Be aware that out-of-season foods are now available year-round, flown and driven from miles away where harmful chemicals are used to keep these foods intact. Many products like hormones, antibiotics, and many other chemical substances are utilized to grow cattle quickly—a grass-fed cow will take two and a half years to grow compared to fourteen months. So you ask, should I use organic or grass-fed beef for some items? You bet!

The following are the famous dirty dozen—those fruits and vegetables that are most contaminated and should be avoided unless organic. (I also buy all of my berries organic.) If you want to start buying

organic produce, start by choosing some of these items—or all of them if you can afford it.

Dirty Dozen

Peaches
Apples
Sweet bell peppers
Celery
Nectarines
Strawberries
Cherries
Pears
Grapes (imported)
Spinach
Lettuce
Potatoes

Don't waste your money on organic for the least contaminated (unless you want to!). These are:

Onions
Avocado
Sweet Corn (frozen)
Pineapples
Mango
Asparagus
Sweet Peas (frozen)
Kiwi
Bananas
Cabbage
Broccoli

Most of my dairy such as milk, yogurt, heavy cream, butter, and cream cheese are also organic. I buy poultry that is organic and beef that is organic and/or grass feed.

Because organic products are becoming readily available, they are also beginning to become more affordable. There is no need to buy everything organic—just stick to the first list (above) and do what you can. In-season produce is best, so if you can't afford organic food, start there.

Oils

Coconut oil

Coconut oil is considered one of the superfoods of the twentieth century. While the concentration of saturated fat is high, the combination of these fatty acids is unique. Coconut oil contains medium chain triglycerides (MCTs), which are fatty acids of medium length rather than long.

Most saturated fatty acids in the diet are made of long-chain fatty acids; however, medium-chain fatty acids

acids in coconut oil are metabolized differently and, because of this, why coconut oil has been found to have many therapeutic effects.

It can kill bacteria, viruses, and fungi, helping to stave off infections, all in part is due to its high content of Lauric acid. Coconut fatty acids are able to turn into ketones, which can help prevent seizures as well as improve brain function, especially for those suffering from Alzheimer's disease.

Coconut oil's medicinal properties have been well-documented. It is one of my favorite oils to bake with and use for no-bake desserts. I always make sure that I buy organic types and that I find virgin and unrefined varieties. Buying coconut oil in bulk is best, so if you have the opportunity to do so, you will save quite a bit of money that way.



Olive oil

Olive oil, as well as extra-virgin olive oil, are my favorite oils to cook with, especially when it comes to stir-frying, sautéing, and roasting. Extra-virgin olive oil has a nuttier, stronger flavor than regular olive oil does since it is the most pure and least acidic. Because of this, I reserve extra-virgin olive oil to be used for salads, spreads, and such. Extra-virgin olive oil has a low smoke point, thus it is good for cold dishes and recipes that don't require heat. Also, when purchasing extra-virgin olive oil, cold press varieties are the best. This ensures that its chemistry through the heat extraction process remains intact, making it a far superior type.

Whenever there is heat involved, regular olive oil is a much more stable oil than extra-virgin olive oil, thus it is my first choice when it comes to sautéing, stir-frying, and roasting.

Sesame oil

In this cookbook, you will see some Asian-inspired recipes where sesame oil is used. It is great on salad dressings and marinades. ~~This oil has a very rich sesame taste that works very well as a flavor enhancer.~~ When you buy sesame oil, you can store it in your cupboard; however, if you feel it is going to last you a long time, keeping it in the refrigerator will increase its shelf life. Also, something to note about sesame oil is that because it has a high smoking point, it is the least likely of the oils to go rancid.

I love using sesame oil for a simple salad dressing, which is what I use in salads most of time. I mix rice wine vinegar with sesame oil. The ratio is 2:1, using more rice wine vinegar than sesame oil. It is my favorite salad dressing. When purchasing rice wine vinegar, just make sure the sweetness doesn't come from high fructose corn syrup.

Flours and more

Gluten-free flour

I love using gluten-free flours, as I bake a lot of gluten-free recipes. I despise any store-bought gluten-free mixes because most have tons of ingredients and some of these ingredients I never use. Also, most of the gluten-free mixes are quite expensive and making your own gluten-free mix is way more economical and very easy. The gluten-free mixes I have made in the past consist of only two different types of gluten-free flour: a combination of any two from almond flour, coconut flour, oat flour, or brown rice flour.

With the following gluten-free flours, I haven't noticed much of a change in consistency when it comes to baking. Not all gluten-free flours are suitable for every dessert recipe, but with a little bit of experimentation, you will be able to learn which one works best.

My favorite gluten-free flours are:

Brown Rice Flour

I mostly use this flour when baking gluten-free cookies, pancakes, or waffles. Sometimes, I mix it with oat flour, but for the most part I try to keep the batter mixture strictly with just brown rice flour. While you can also purchase just plain rice flour, I prefer organic brown rice flour. When storing brown rice flour, make sure after you open the package you store the flour in the refrigerator.



Coconut Flour

Coconut flour is another flour that I use very often. I use this type of flour for baking recipes such as cakes, muffins, cupcakes, or loaf breads. It is not a flour that I use in cookie recipes because I don't find that coconut flour gives the conventional cookie-crunchy texture. I have seen coconut flour used in raw desserts; however, I have never tried that before. I have found coconut flour to be one of the trickiest flours to experiment with just because it behaves differently than any other flours. Coconut flour needs a lot of fluid since it absorbs a lot of liquid. When baking with coconut flour most recipes call for more eggs, milk, or any other liquid of some sort. Don't be afraid of this flour. While there may be more liquid required when using this type of flour, the texture and taste are excellent for some baking desserts, especially cakes, cupcakes, and muffins.

Almond Flour

I truly love almond flour; however, because it is so expensive, I normally mix it with other gluten-free flours, especially coconut flour. I love using it for cakes, muffins, and cupcakes. This flour is also suitable for cookies and such. Even though the cookie texture may not be as crunchy, it is a great choice when it comes to baking cookie recipes. I have also used it in many raw desserts. Buying in bulk makes this item more economical. If you buy almond flour, make sure you keep it in the fridge.

Oat Flour

Oat flour is another of my favorite gluten-free flours to use because it is very easy to make. All you need

to do is place gluten-free rolled oats in your food processor and pulse for a few seconds to obtain powder/flour consistency. I have used it in cake butters, raw desserts, and pancakes. I haven't experimented with it too much at this point, but so far, so good!

Quinoa Flour

While I haven't experimented with quinoa flour that much, either, I have found it to be great in baking recipes such as cakes and cookies. You can substitute quinoa flour at about a 1:1 ratio for wheat flour. Making your own quinoa flour is also very easy. Start by rinsing the quinoa, draining, and baking for 12–15 minutes at 350 degrees Fahrenheit in a preheated oven. Then, when the quinoa is nice and dried, use a spice grinder until it is evenly ground into a flour-like consistency.

Regular Flours

Whole Wheat Pastry Flour

I have been using whole wheat pastry flour for as long as I can remember. It is my go-to regular flour for almost anything—you can use this type of flour for any baking or savory recipes from pizzas to breads, cookies, cakes, muffins, and much more. This is the reason why I started using more gluten-free flours. I was using so much whole wheat pastry flour that I wanted to change things up a bit and experiment with other options. I still love using whole wheat pastry flour; I just do it a lot less these days!

Aluminum-free Baking Soda and Aluminum-free Baking Powder

Not long ago, I made the switch to aluminum-free baking soda and baking powder. It is surprising to see how many different chemicals the food industry introduces to some of our food items that are actually not required. If you haven't tried aluminum-free baking soda or baking powder, I suggest you do so. They are not much more expensive and they're better for you. Why on Earth would you want aluminum in your baking recipes? I sure don't.

Arrowroot Powder

I use this powder in place of corn starch. It actually behaves in the same manner as corn starch, as it is also a thickener; however, arrowroot powder is a healthier option. The process of making arrowroot powder is far better than how corn starch is made. I won't get into the nitty gritty, but if you can get your hands on arrowroot powder instead of corn starch, I greatly suggest switching to this healthier ingredient.

Grains

Quinoa

I love using organic quinoa. I always buy it in bulk because it can get very expensive. I normally use quinoa interchangeably with organic brown rice. Just make sure when using quinoa that you rinse it a few times prior to using. Also, store quinoa in a cool, dry place properly sealed either in its original package or in a glass container with an hermetic seal. You can also make your own quinoa flour to use in your baking recipes, so instead of wasting money, just invest a few minutes to make your own.

Organic Brown Rice

Brown rice is one of the grains we eat most in my house. I didn't want my kids to get bored of rice, so I started using quinoa and changing things a bit. Don't get me wrong—I do love to eat brown rice, but I find having a variety of ingredients works best, especially when it comes to feeding kids. Just make sure you buy organic brown rice varieties as well as use brown rice varieties that have more minerals, vitamins, and fiber than the regular white rice kinds.

Whole Wheat Pasta

Like whole wheat pastry flour, I found myself using a lot of whole wheat pasta. I do love pasta, and pasta recipes are very common on my weekly menus. For this reason, I also started using gluten-free pasta. As a rule of thumb, we never use any white grains such as white flours, white pasta, white rice, or white bread. I always buy 100 percent whole wheat grains. Complex carbohydrates are the sources of energy, so I suggest purchasing these rather than the white varieties for a healthier option.



Gluten-Free Pasta

Though a little bit more expensive, I like to use a gluten-free variety of pasta from time to time. As stated, I cook so much pasta during the week that I switched to gluten-free pastas and found it to be beneficial. The types that I enjoy most are those that mix a couple of gluten-free flours such as quinoa and brown rice flour.

Rolled Oats

Rolled oats is another very common food staple in my house. I also buy this in bulk; however, buying ~~gluten-free rolled oats can be a little bit trickier for those that need them. I have found~~ gluten-free rolled oats in smaller packages; however, since none of my family members are celiac, spending the extra money is not necessary for us. If you are celiac, however, buying gluten-free rolled oats is a must.

Nuts and Seeds

While nuts and seeds may be high in calories and fats, these fats are not only the healthier ones, but the array of good nutrients nuts and seeds provide outweighs the high caloric content. In moderation, nuts and seeds are a nutrient-dense food source of many essential minerals, vitamins, and protein, so don't be afraid to cook and bake with these. I normally choose raw varieties and modify them according to the recipe. If they need to be toasted, baked, or salted, I like to be the one to control that. When storing nuts and seeds, I always use glass containers with hermetic lids. If you are keeping nuts for a long time, I suggest freezing them. Because they are high in oil, if you keep nuts outside for too long, they may become rancid.

Some of my favorite nuts and seeds to cook with follow; however, on occasion I also enjoy brazil nuts and hazelnuts.

Cashews

Cashew nuts are packed with energy, antioxidants, minerals, and vitamins essential for our health. They have a ton of soluble dietary fiber, vitamins, minerals, and numerous health-promoting phyto-chemicals that help protect us from diseases and cancers. Cashews are a great nut, especially while making vegan dessert recipes. It is one of the nuts I rely most on, as I can use it to make vegan ice cream with a creamier consistency or for energy bars, crusts, and much more.



Almonds

Almonds are another nutrient power house because they lower cholesterol, help to build strong bones and teeth, and are also high in protein. They have an array of benefits and are very versatile for many recipes. For the most part, I like to consume almonds in their raw state or use in crusts for raw desserts and when making nut butter. In addition, on occasion I like to bake with almond flour when making gluten-free cakes and muffins. Almonds can also be great in trail mixes and granola.

Walnuts

Walnuts are the nuts I grew up eating. My relatives had walnut trees and we always ate them as a snack. Like almonds, I like to enjoy walnuts in their raw state; however, this is the nut that I tend to also like lightly roasted and added to salads. Like almonds, walnuts are great for heart health and cancer-fighting properties. They contain antioxidants and omega-3 fatty acids and help to reduce inflammation.

Pistachios

Pistachios are my kids' favorite nut. Like many other nuts, pistachios are great for heart health because they contain L-arginine, which can make the lining of your arteries more flexible and decrease the likelihood of developing blood clots that could cause a heart attack. They are also rich in vitamin E, which makes it less likely for your arteries to become clogged with plaque. Pistachios, like any other nuts, are great sprinkled in salads, yogurt, granola, trail mixes, and even added to smoothies to increase

protein content.

Pumpkin Seeds

Pumpkin seeds are very rich in zinc, which is important for immunity, sleep, mood, eye, and skin health, insulin regulation, and male sexual function. Pumpkin seeds are rich in tryptophan, an amino acid that the body converts into serotonin, which in turn is converted into melatonin, the sleep hormone, thus it may help you sleep better. Roasted pumpkin seeds are great and are an awesome snack to keep around.

Sesame Seeds

I love using sesame seeds for salad and Asian cooking. Its rich flavor is intoxicating and, while I use black sesame seeds more often for their higher mineral content, I do use white sesame seeds together with black for the contrast in color. Sesame seeds are high in copper, manganese, and calcium, and they are also good for digestion. Like pumpkin seeds, sesame also contains thiamin and tryptophan that help produce serotonin, which reduces pain, assists in regulating moods, and helps you sleep deeply.

Sunflower Seeds

Sunflower seeds are a rich source of vitamins E and B-1, as well as copper. Sunflower seeds are one of the most predominant seeds in Spain. I love adding these seeds to salads and even eating them raw. They are a great snack to have around since they can be added to an array of dishes.

Beans and Legumes

Even though I am not strictly vegetarian anymore, I was for eighteen years. I relied on beans and legumes because they are an excellent source of protein and fiber. They also have vitamins and minerals and are nutrient dense. Lentils and garbanzo beans, or the so-called chickpeas, are the ones I use most. I love lentils because they are high in iron, they cook really fast, and you can find them in an array of colors. They are a great ingredient to add to your salads, soups, and stews and are a good alternative to meat. I have used chickpeas in both savory and sweet recipes. I love how versatile they are and, like lentils, they are very rich in iron. On occasion, I also use black and red beans. These are great in soups and stews, and I have also used them to bake cakes with. Puréed, they are a healthy alternative ingredient for cake batters. Like with nuts and seeds, whenever possible I like to store my beans and legumes in glass containers.

Sweeteners

Maple syrup, medjool dates, honey, and coconut sugar are my healthier sweeteners of choice when baking and sometimes cooking.

Honey

While I don't use honey that much for baking (its properties get degraded with heat), occasionally I like to add it to smoothies, toasts, and things of that nature. I also like to buy raw varieties, as the flavor and nutrient quality is superior than conventional honey brands.

Coconut Sugar

I have recently switched to using coconut sugar, also called coconut palm sugar, for most of my baking. Coconut sugar is rich in certain minerals such as iron, zinc, calcium, and potassium. It contains a fiber called Inulin, which may slow glucose absorption and is why coconut sugar has a lower glycemic index than regular table sugar. Coconut sugar is a great healthier alternative to use in place of white sugar, so highly recommended switching to this type.

Maple Syrup

I probably use maple syrup more often than any other type of sweetener. Maple syrup is actually made from the sugary circulating fluid (sap) of maple trees. The fluid is collected and boiled to remove impurities to make it a thicker, more concentrated syrup.

I tend to use this sweetener for both raw and baking desserts. There are different types of maple syrup you can use and, depending on what you are making, you can choose from the following: Light Amber, Medium Amber, and Dark Amber (all Grade A) and then a darker type (Grade B).



The main difference between them is that the darker syrups are made from sap extracted later in the harvesting season. The dark syrups have a stronger maple flavor and are typically used for baking, while the lighter ones are used directly as syrups like on pancakes.

Medjool Dates

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