

CHUCK PEA

vegan *varieties*

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Sweet & Pleasant Remembrances

FOODS THAT MADE ME

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Chips Ahoy, Rice Krispie Squares, Pop Tarts, Nutter Butters, Skippy PB & J's - your run of the mill 90's after-school snack.

Like many of my peers, busy working parents raised me. The self-employed creatives they were, and still are, were always on the go. Their relentless hustle left them often away from home. Our nuclear family of four, gathered around our kitchen island or dining room table was wishful thinking and certainly not a nightly occurrence. My mother would throw together something for my sister and I before she ran out of the door, a babysitter would order us up pizza, or the women of the house the would eat while my father was out working that evening's event.

Packing lunch or preparing dinner was almost always my mother's responsibility. My father's culinary abilities are limited to toast, grilled meats and his infamous cottage fried potatoes. As I watched my mother in the kitchen, I saw it was something that didn't come easily to her. She came of age in the second wave feminist period and like many of her peers developed a certain attitude towards cooking. Reliance on the microwave and prepared foods = less time behind the stove = freedom to pursue a career or develop non-domestic skills. In addition, my father, sister and I all had wildly different food preferences. When she was in the kitchen, she became a short order cook. Dad hated salad dressing; my sister only ate buttered pasta or foods with a chocolate component. I had an insatiable craving for sauce and condiments often helping myself to seconds of marinara minus the spaghetti.

My mother was tasked with raising a family in the 90's, before peak processed food demonization. We subsisted on more store bought conveniences than I'm sure she'd like to retrospectively admit. There were fish stick nights, Kraft Dinner (Canada's answer to boxed mac n cheese), and a slew of deli meats. I don't blame her, it was what you did and I was far from the only kid eating

frozen reconstituted chicken fingers. Now, as an adult, I never crave or long for these foods. The pre-packaged sweets, however, are a different story.

I came of age in Toronto, where our grocery store aisles aren't lined with Entenmann's or Little Debbie, but rather treats with names like Passion Flakie, Joe Louis and, Viva Puffs. My nostalgic hankerings are specifically for the treats found at the birthday parties or tucked inside lunch boxes, all individually cellophane wrapped. When I return to Canada and take a stroll down the cookie aisle there is something about the kismet of glucose-fructose, "artificial flavor" and various "gums" that elicit a certain hunger in me. The most amusing part is that these processed goodies are often vegan or at least vegan-ish. No trace of real butter, eggs or animal protein in sight.

To re-visit this formative food era, I have selected two of my favorite treats, the s'more and oatmeal cookie. I felt they needed a transformation beyond their original iterations. My fondness for them was developed in two disparate camps of food memory, but powerful just the same.

I spent my summers in the wilderness, swimming in the pristine freshwater lakes, staying up late to catch Aurora Borealis and capping the days off singing John Denver around a campfire. If I were lucky that would be accompanied by more than just acoustic guitar sing-a-longs. We'd be making classic camp treats - the always rustic banana boats, brownies baked in an orange, and the most infamous s'more.

More often than not the tin-foiled bananas wouldn't caramelize, the brownies would still be a little raw on the inside and the sandwiched marshmallow would be more charred black than golden brown. Although born a perfectionist, I didn't hold my campfire confections to the same degree I now hold my cakes to. It didn't matter. I loved

the interactivity, the degree of customization each treat held and the amount of laughter that always ensued.

My fondness for the oatmeal cookie is rooted in the quotidian school lunch box. My mother, being the loving and sweet woman she is, always included a treat. Each day there would be some sort of Disney "fruit" snack and two or three cookies. A rotation of Oreos or the Canadian selections of Peak Freens, President's Choice Decadent Chocolate Chip or if I was so lucky Dad's Original Oatmeal Cookies. They were perfection. In the box came twelve cello wrapped packs of two. Once your tiny ten-year-old hands ripped open the little gift, you were treated to a pure crunchy, crumbly cookie like no other. Unadulterated by raisins or chocolate chips. Just pure processed oatmeal flavor. Only something that can be achieved with the addition of a mysterious "artificial flavor." Every other oatmeal cookie I've ever had has been soft & chewy, but not this one. A unique breed the Dad's Cookie is.

Of course, now as an adult, I prefer a treat that is a little more homemade. Any house-made marshmallow is going to trump a Jet-Puffed one. I still can't deny their transportive capabilities of ripping open one of those little packs of surreally crispy cookies or biting down on an oozing s'more made with Hershey's chocolate. It takes me back to the time when I began to cultivate what my version of what delicious was. Not every child liked oatmeal cookies or preferred their marshmallow the exact perfect shade of golden. These were unique to my developing palate and me. A quality I've been honing ever since.

Inspired by the summers and school lunches of my pre-teen years, I present you two modern, slightly more adult interpretations of the s'more and oatmeal cookie. These are more elaborate recipes, perfect for a weekend baking project or to mark a celebration.

Happiness
is knowing
there's
cake in the
oven





snores cake

Looking for that satisfying combination of graham cracker crumb, rich chocolate and, gooey marshmallow? Unlike the campfire classic, this one is made to share. Adapted from the back of a Nabisco box of the days of yore.

YIELD

two-tiered 8-inch round layer cake, approximately 12 servings

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

top oven broiler or blow torch

TIME

active 1hr, total 2 hrs

INGREDIENTS

GRAHAM CRACKER CAKE

- 1 1/2 cups graham cracker crumbs (from about 20 squares)
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 2 1/2 tsp baking powder
- generous pinch of salt
- 3/4 cup non-dairy milk, I used almond
- 2 tbs apple cider vinegar
- 3/4 cup neutral cooking oil such as canola or safflower, additional for greasing
- 1 tsp vanilla extract

CHOCOLATE GANACHE

- 16 oz. dark chocolate, the higher the quality the better, coarsely chopped
- 1 15oz. can full-fat coconut milk
- 1/2 tsp vanilla

TOPPING

- 6 vegan marshmallows, halved – ensure they are gelatin-free

INSTRUCTIONS

CAKE

1. Ensure oven rack is in the middle of the oven and preheat oven to 350°F. Grease two 8-inch round cake pans and line the bottoms with parchment & grease with oil.
2. Pulse broken graham crackers in a food processor until crumbs are achieved.
3. In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, graham cracker crumbs, sugar, baking powder and, salt. Set aside. In a small bowl, whisk together milk & apple cider vinegar. Let stand for 2 minutes until milk curdles. In a medium bowl stir together the milk mixture, oil and vanilla.
4. Slowly in batches, add the dry ingredients to the wet, stirring to incorporate as you go. Mix thoroughly, being careful not to over mix. Divide the batter evenly between prepared pans.
5. Bake for 25-28 minutes or until tops are golden brown and sides begin to pull away from the pans. Place both pans on a cooling rack and allow the cakes to cool for at least 20 minutes.
6. Very carefully remove cakes from pans and place on a rack to cool before frosting and assembling. This cake is fragile; please exercise extra caution when removing from pan. Allow for cakes to come to room temperature before assembling.

ASSEMBLY

1. Make the ganache while the cake is cooling. Place the chocolate in a heatproof medium-sized bowl. Set aside. In a small saucepan over medium-high heat, heat the coconut milk until bubbles just begin to appear around the edges and steam rises from the surface. Careful not to overheat, milk may separate. Pour the hot coconut milk over the chopped chocolate and let stand without stirring for 5 minutes. After 5 minutes, stir the chocolate-coconut milk mixture until glossy, smooth and all chocolate has melted. Add the vanilla extract and mix until incorporated. Allow ganache to cool to room temperature.
2. Once your cake has cooled, place one layer on cake stand or serving plate. Top with half of the ganache. Smooth on top and sides. Repeat with the second layer.
3. Line a baking sheet with parchment and place marshmallows, allowing for space between each. Carefully place under broiler on low with oven door ajar. Broil for approximately 2 minutes or until marshmallows are golden brown. Wait for marshmallows to cool slightly 1-2 minutes. Place the marshmallows in a ring on the outside of the cake.

NOTES

1. Graham cracker cake is very fragile. Use caution when removing from the pan.
2. Vegan Ingredients – Make sure to use vegan marshmallows and graham crackers. I used Dandies, but Trader Joe's and a few other brands make excellent versions. Nabisco crackers are vegan, but many other varieties use honey as sweeteners.
3. I used store bought marshmallows & graham crackers, but feel free to make your own.



Oatmeal Cookie Cream Pie

WITH A CHERRY ON TOP

A riff on my favorite childhood cookie, but with a cream pie twist -- an allusion to its sandwich cookie sister. I just had to finish it with the preferred garnish of my youth, the iridescent maraschino cherry.

YIELD

approximately 8-10 servings

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

electric hand mixer

TIME

active 1.5hrs, total 8 hours or overnight

FILLING

- 3 tbsp cornstarch
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- pinch sea salt
- 1 2/3 cups oat milk* carefully examine the sugar content – if can't find almond or hazelnut will be a nice substitute
- 1 tsp pure vanilla extract

CRUST

- 1 cup rolled oats
- 2 tbsp all-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 3 tbsp finely chopped almonds, I used pre-sliced and chopped them further
- 1/4 + 1 tbsp melted coconut oil
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 1/2 tsp cinnamon
- pinch of salt

COCONUT WHIPPED CREAM

- 2 14-oz. cans coconut cream, refrigerated overnight
- 1/2 tsp vanilla extract
- 3-7 tbsp powdered sugar

CARAMELIZED OAT CRUMBLE

- 1 tbsp melted coconut oil
- 2 tbsp brown sugar
- generous pinch of salt
- 1/4 cup rolled oats

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Refrigerate your cans of coconut milk (for the coconut whipped cream) the night before. (Or, always have some in the fridge!)
2. To get started, make the filling. Add the cornstarch, sugar, and salt to a small saucepan and whisk in the milk to avoid clumps. Place over medium-low heat and cook until slightly bubbling, whisking frequently. Reduce heat to low and continue cooking for 4-6 more minutes, using a rubber spatula to scrape the sides and bottom constantly. The mixture is done when it has the texture of pudding and a ribbon forms when a spatula is dragged through it. Immediately remove from heat.

Whisk in vanilla and transfer to a glass/ceramic bowl. Cover with plastic wrap, ensuring the plastic wrap is touches the surface of the filling to prevent a film from forming. Refrigerate until cooled and set – 3-4 hours.

3. Prepare the crust. Preheat oven to 350°F and grease an 8” pie pan. In a medium bowl, combine the oats, flour, sugar, almonds, coconut oil, vanilla, cinnamon & salt. Mix until well combined. The mixture should hold together when pinched. Press the oat mixture into the pie pan, making sure to go up the sides and cover the bottom of the pan. Bake for 20-22 minutes until lightly browned. Cool completely.

4. While the crust is baking, make the whipped cream. Place a medium-large glass mixing bowl in the freezer. Chill for 5 minutes. Carefully open cans of refrigerated coconut cream and scoop out the hardened cream that should have

formed at the surface into the chilled bowl. Discard remaining coconut water or reserve for smoothies/another use. Using a hand-held mixer, whip the cream until it thickens and peaks form, approximately 1 minute. Slowly add in powdered sugar, tablespoon by tablespoon. Adjust sweetness to taste. Continue to mix until light and airy - about 2-3 minutes - scraping down sides as needed. Wrap tightly with plastic wrap and set in refrigerator to chill.

5. When the crust is done, turn the oven down to 325°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Combine coconut oil, sugar and salt in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Bring mixture to a boil for one minute, stirring constantly. Sugar should melt and form a caramel-like texture. Remove from heat and stir in the oats. Pour the mixture onto the prepared baking sheet and spread into an even layer.

Bake for 18 minutes or until golden brown, tossing the oats at the halfway mark. Remove from oven and allow to cool on baking sheet. Once cooled, store in an airtight container.

6. Put it all together! Mix half the coconut whipped cream to the oatmeal custard filling. Stir to combine. Add the filling to the prepared crust. Place in refrigerator to set for 3-4 hours.

When ready to serve, top with whipped cream, approximately 1 cup or to have a generous layer covering the surface. Place the cherry in center and scatter the oat crumble over the surface. Store leftovers gently covered in the refrigerator up to 3 days. The pie is best consumed within the first 48 hours.

**As much as I love homemade things, do not use homemade oat milk. It separates when heated. I loved the oat-y flavor that the milk imparted, but sugar content can drastically vary. Oatly and Elmhurst Farms, both available on Amazon, make a product that has 5-7 grams of sugar per serving, which works well with this recipe.*