

An Unlikely Culinary Column: Summer Treats

By Karen Kain

It is hard to believe that there was a time when sugar was rationed and sweets were truly a treat; now you can find those empty sugary calories everywhere you look.

I am not sure that our bodies were designed to be such gluttonous creatures. Today most snacks are full of sugar and fat; although they taste delicious, I find that they leave me feeling guilty after eating, so I just avoid making them all together. My husband and I are really trying to eliminate the sugar out of our diet. The hardest part is breaking the habit of enjoying a bit of chocolate after dinner.

I wanted to play with some healthy recipe ideas that will help us to get away from our sugar addiction this summer. In my search I came across this vegan Mocha Ice Cream recipe that claims to be a Starbucks copy. I try to steer away from spending my calories and dollars at Starbucks, but I do love their sweet drinks, so I wanted to give this recipe a try. As with all things I cook, I taste as I go and before the ice cream was even frozen I had a hard time putting my spoon down. I really loved this vegan ice cream. I have made this recipe twice and keep some in my freezer for those days that I am really craving chocolate. This dessert was super easy to make. Both the texture and flavor were spot on.

One of my favorite things about summer is hosting a tie-dye class. Each year I look forward to having the kids over and watching how creative they

are. I am always learning when spending time with children and it seems that they are just getting smarter. The class is always at a time when summer is in full swing and it is hot, which is the perfect time for eating popsicles. So I wanted to make some up for the kids to enjoy. For some reason I wasn't exactly prepared and I found myself in a bit of a pinch, so I just threw together some ingredients that I had on hand. I opened up a can of frozen limeade and instead of adding 3 cans of water I added two cans of water, frozen blackberries and some of the currants that I picked. I was curious how the kids would receive these fruity treats. One boy asked me if these were healthy popsicles. Most of the kids liked the popsicles but the little ones found them to be a bit tart. If you are making these for little ones I would suggest that you add 3 cans of water or maybe substitute a can of watermelon juice to make them a bit sweeter. You could also use orange juice instead of the limeade. In all honesty the kids were put off a bit by the currants and found that feeding them to the pigs was a really good idea. I think popsicles are for kids of all ages and the adults appreciated that they weren't too sweet. You can use any fresh fruit combination. I very much enjoy incorporating fresh summer fruit into my desserts. Whilst making this concoction I was taste testing, of course, and thought that this mixture would make a lovely adult blended beverage by adding some rum or tequila... just an idea.

Lastly, I recently learned about

PBfit, which is peanut butter powder that eliminates much of the fat but is a great source of protein. I picked some up and have been waiting for the right time to start playing with it. In the heat of summer I find that I am often too hot to eat a meal but hungry and in need of some sustenance. I decided to make a Banana Peanut Protein Shake. Since I have been trying to keep my cholesterol in check I keep almond milk in the refrigerator and this worked out perfectly in this yummy snacky smoothie.

I hope you are all enjoying the summer weather and eating the fresh fruits that seem to be everywhere.

Vegan Mocha Ice Cream

Ingredients:

- 1 Cup raw cashews
- 1 ½ Cups unsweetened almond milk
- ½ Cup cocoa powder
- ½ Cup coconut sugar
- 2 Tablespoons agave
- 1 Teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 Teaspoons instant coffee, or instant espresso (I used Hills Bros. Cappuccino, English toffee)
- 1 pinch of salt



Instructions:

Add all the ingredients into a blender and blend until the mixture is creamy smooth. Pour into an ice cream maker and churn until it forms a firm soft serve ice cream and enjoy!

Fresh Fruit Popsicles

Ingredients:

- 1-12 Ounce can limeade
- 2 Cans water
- 1 Cup fresh summer fruit, I used currants
- 2 Cups blackberries

Instructions:

Drop some fruit chunks into the bottom of the popsicle molds. In a blender blend together the remaining ingredients and fill the mold, then freeze overnight. Serve outside because these popsicles are messy and they tend to stain hands and clothes.

Banana Peanut Protein Shake

Ingredients:

- 1 Banana
- 1 Cup almond or coconut milk
- 4 Tablespoons PBfit powder
- 2-3 Tablespoons cocoa powder, optional
- 1 Cup fresh raspberries, optional

Instructions:

In a blender blend all the ingredients together and enjoy.

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