



Pumpkin and spice breakfast bowl.

Melissa D'Arabian via AP

Put pumpkin puree to work as part of a frozen winter treat

By MELISSA D'ARABIAN
Associated Press

All four of my daughters love frozen acai bowls because they feel like you're eating ice cream for breakfast, except healthier. If you haven't hopped on the acai bowl craze, allow me to update you. Superfood acai berry puree is blended up with fruit — usually berries or banana — and then served thick, creamy and semi-frozen, topped with granola, fruit, nuts or other goodies.

You can buy gorgeous berry-topped bowls at juice bars across the country, or make your own by blending up the base, pouring it into individual bowls and freezing. Once frozen solid, they'll last for weeks.

But, you'll need to let it soften a little to achieve the desired consistency, which means this is a great make-ahead breakfast.

Stock up the freezer with frozen bowls, and pull them out as needed to thaw a few minutes on the counter, adding toppings, and eat.

But frozen breakfast bowls are also fantastic as a to-go snack in a lunchbox: an icepack slows down the thawing enough to have the bowl at the perfect texture about two hours later. And don't worry if you miss the mark: even if it completely thaws, the bowl stays tasty, even if more smoothie-bowl-esque than ice-creamy.

Today, I'm winterizing this summertime treat by swapping out the acai and bringing in the beloved flavors of the season in my Pumpkin and Spice Breakfast Bowl. Pumpkin puree is not only perfectly seasonal, but it boasts a ton of vitamin A (more

PUMPKIN & SPICE BREAKFAST BOWLS

Servings: 4

Start to finish: 15 minutes, plus freezing and thawing time

Base:

- 1 large ripe banana, sliced
- 1 ½ cups canned pumpkin puree
- 1 cup reduced fat vanilla Greek yogurt (nonfat yogurt not recommended)
- ¼ teaspoon pumpkin pie spice (or mix of cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves and allspice)
- pinch of salt

Topping:

- 2 small apples, thinly sliced
- ¼ cup pecan halves or pieces
- ¼ cup raw oats
- 4 teaspoons maple syrup

Place all the ingredients for the base into a blender and blend until creamy and smooth, about one minute. *(Tip: Blend on low. You may need to start and stop blender, breaking up the ingredients using a wooden spoon when NOT blending.)* Divide the blended mixture among four individual freezer-safe bowls or to-go containers. Top and eat as is for a smoothie bowl. Or, freeze for at least 30 minutes, or up to a month (covered). Just before serving, top with apples, pecans, oats and the maple syrup drizzled on top.

Breakfast bowl can then be eaten frozen like an ice cream: Allow a frozen solid bowl to soften a little before — at room temperature, this will take approximately 20 minutes.

In a lunchbox with an ice pack, the ideal frozen eating time is 1-2 hours after removing from the freezer. If the bowls “overthaw,” simply enjoy them as smoothie bowls.

Chef's Note: Customize your toppings swapping in nuts, seeds, fruit, berries, chia seeds, hemp hearts, or shaved coconut.

Nutrition information per serving: 235 calories; 68 calories from fat; 8 g fat (1 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 4 mg cholesterol; 97 mg sodium; 39 g carbohydrate; 8 g fiber; 22 g sugar; 9 g protein.

than a day's worth in one serving), and a smattering of other vitamins, minerals and fiber. And, it's naturally sweet so not a lot of extra sugar is needed to make this breakfast feel like more of an indulgence than it actually is. Loading up the freezer with these bowls is an excellent plan-ahead

strategy, whether you're a mom of four, or you just want to streamline your mornings.

Food Network star Melissa d'Arabian is an expert on healthy eating on a budget. She is the author of the cookbook, "Supermarket Healthy."

Scotch stars in this fall cocktail with pear and warm spices

By THE CULINARY
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Associated Press

Cold-weather cocktails aren't limited to eggnogs and mulled ciders. In fact, the flavors of fall and winter can be just as exciting, and even as refreshing, as those beachy concoctions we sip during the summer. And there's an ingredient you may not have considered that is definitely worth adding to your repertoire — scotch.

In this Spiced Orchard Pear recipe from The Culinary Institute of America, scotch is the unexpected star. The drink highlights the best of the fall season, with notes of citrus to help you ease into the snowy winter.

CIA instructor Rory Brown says, “The flavor from the orange liqueur and the lemon juice balance the cocktail and act as a transition into winter.”

Of course, it wouldn't be a fall cocktail without the familiar flavors of juicy pear and the warmth of spices, and while you may be less accustomed to using scotch in cocktails, this recipe may change your mind. Though its name may conjure up images of mens' clubs and leather-bound books, a new generation is helping to move it into the mainstream.

Scotch is basically the embodiment of fall, with its caramel flavors perfectly complimenting the aroma from your neighbor's fireplace. And while many think of scotch as whisky's smoky cousin, not all Scotch is smoky.

Widely regarded for its long history, Scotch is a whisky — much like those produced in the U.S. — made in Scotland under some very specific requirements. Part of the historical process is to toast and dry the malt before processing. Peat, a sort of spongy, mossy material that is abundant in the earth of Ireland and Scotland, remains a popular fuel source in Scotland. When burned, peat gives off an unmistakably fragrant smoke, and when used to dry the malt, it imparts a strong flavor that carries through to the finished product.

The scotches produced on the island of Islay are known to be among the smokiest (or, the peatiest), but overall, scotches run the gamut in color, flavor, and aroma, and certainly not all are created equal. Experiment with producers, regions, and blends to find your favorite.

By now, you should be checking to see if it's cocktail hour. But don't rush it, because you have a



Phil Mansfield/The Culinary Institute of America

Spiced orchard pear cocktail.

SPICED ORCHARD PEAR

Servings: 1

Start to finish: 25 minutes (Active time: 5 minutes)

- 2 ounces blended Scotch
- ¾ ounce pear puree
- ½ ounce orange liqueur
- ¼ ounce freshly squeezed lemon juice
- ¼ ounce Winter Syrup (recipe below)
- 1 cinnamon stick, for garnish (see note)

In a cocktail shaker, combine the Scotch, pear puree, orange liqueur, lemon juice, and syrup. Add ice, then shake until well-combined.

Strain into a rocks glass, over fresh ice, and garnish with the cinnamon stick.

Chef's Note: If desired, lightly burn one end of the cinnamon stick with a torch. Invert the rocks glass over the cinnamon stick on a heat-safe surface or plate while you prepare the cocktail.

Winter Syrup:

- 2 cups water
- 2 cups sugar
- The peel of 1 orange, white pith removed
- 1 star anise
- 3 whole cloves
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 5 cardamom pods

Combine water, sugar, orange peel, anise, cloves, cinnamon, and cardamom in a medium saucepan over medium heat.

Cook until the mixture is simmering and the sugar has dissolved.

Set aside until cool, then strain. Refrigerate for up to 3 weeks.

Nutrition information per serving: 211 calories; 0 calories from fat; 0 g fat (0 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 0 mg cholesterol; 7 mg sodium; 13 g carbohydrate; 1 g fiber; 10 g sugar; 0 g protein.

few things to do first. The best cocktails don't come easy — except for gin and tonics, which are easy and perfect, but not seasonally appropriate — but luckily, this one is pretty close.

You can find pear puree in the freezer section of some grocery stores, but if not, just put 3 to 4 peeled and cored pears in a saucepan with about 1/4 cup of water. Cook until the pears are soft, then blend them to a smooth puree. Cool them before using, and keep in the refrigerator for a week or so. While it's cooling, make your simple syrup.

Simple syrups are an equal mix of sugar and water, boiled to dissolve

the sugar. We often add flavorings like vanilla, fruit essence, or spices. Make your simple syrup weeks ahead, if you like. And use any leftover syrup in other cocktails (it screams fall sangria), to sweeten iced tea, or even tossed with apples for your apple pie.

We know that not everyone is on the prowl for a good cocktail, so if you would prefer a nonalcoholic version, combine the pear puree, lemon juice, and simple syrup with a splash of club soda, seltzer, or good quality ginger beer. You can torch the end of the cinnamon stick (we give a quick how-to in the recipe) for a smoky garnish that is just like the real deal.

Tips for air travel: How to find deals and when to book

By BETH J. HARPAZ
AP Travel Editor

NEW YORK — Booking air travel is stressful. How far in advance should you book? Did you get the best fare?

That anxiety is magnified this time of year as travelers finalize holiday plans and look ahead to winter getaways and spring break. In an interview with AP Travel's “Get Outta Here” podcast, Airfare-Watchdog.com founder George Hobica offered some advice for finding the best deals.

Fare searches and price tracking

“Sign up for airfare alerts,” Hobica said. “There are many website products that will give you an alert when the fare goes up or down,” including Airfare-Watchdog, Google Flights, Expedia, Kayak and Priceline.

Just remember not all airlines are tracked by every website. For example, Delta flights don't show up on Hopper, JetBlue no longer sells tickets on Vayama and Southwest bans third-party websites from automatically scraping its data. AirfareWatchdog includes Southwest flights by manually collecting the information.

AirfareWatchdog also specializes in spotting deals that may “only last for a few hours or maybe a day or two,” Hobica said. Sign up for alerts for specific routes and you'll receive an email when prices hit reasonable levels or go on sale.

Hoping to score a \$1 or \$20



AP Photo/Tony Gutierrez, File

Booking flights can be stressful as consumers worry about how to get the best deal and how far ahead to book, especially at holiday time. Experts say check multiple websites for prices and forget the notion that there's a magic day of the week or time of day when fares drop.

“mistake fare” that airlines publish by accident? Hobica says they're “rare these days” because airline computers are programmed to catch them.

How far in advance should you book?

“Last-minute fares are always more expensive,” Hobica said.

Some studies suggest that nine to 12 weeks ahead is the best time frame for booking domestic tickets.

How about holiday fares? Should you book Thanksgiving fares in April or May?

“Definitely start looking as early as possible if you know you're going to travel over a holiday,” Hobica said.

Prices are higher around the

holidays because many travelers prefer the same schedule. They want to arrive in time for the meal on Thanksgiving Thursday or be back at work the first weekday after Christmas. If your schedule is flexible, you'll get a better price by staying a day or two later or leaving a day early. “Traveling on the Saturday after Thanksgiving is going to be cheaper than the Sunday after Thanksgiving,” he said.

Magic day to book?

“I don't think there is a magic formula or a magic time of the week to look for a good airfare,” said Hobica. “There is a myth out there that Tuesday is the best time to book airfares.”

Airlines do announce sales on Tuesdays, he said, but also post sales on Fridays, sometimes unannounced, “hoping people will buy the last remaining seats on a flight.”

Hobica also sometimes sees “amazing airfare sales on Saturday and Sunday” when searches by consumers tend to fall off. Sometimes the lower demand can push automated pricing down.

Does the very act of repeatedly searching for a flight nudge prices higher? Hobica says no. But you could see prices rise while you're searching if all the cheap seats get booked by others. Usually airlines limit how many seats sell at the lowest fares.

Booking tips

Is it better to book through airline websites?

Not necessarily. The same flight might be priced differently on different third-party sites. A search engine like BookingBuddy.com lets you compare the same flight on different websites. Sometimes an online travel agency like Expedia or Priceline will offer a lower fare than the airline because of a specially negotiated deal, Hobica said.

But if there's a problem with the flight, it might be easier to straighten out if you've booked directly with the airline.

Other tips:

• If fares drop after you book, you're probably stuck with the higher fare because airlines charge so much to change tickets. But there are a few exceptions.

Southwest, for example, does not charge for changing tickets. And U.S. Department of Transportation rules state that passengers may “cancel a booking without penalty, for 24 hours after the reservation is made, if they make the reservation one week or more prior to a flight's departure date.” That means if the price drops within 24 hours, you can rebook without penalty on flights at least a week out.

• If you're buying multiple seats on the same flight, book the trips separately for each traveler. Airlines limit how many seats are sold at the lowest fare, and if there's only one cheap seat left, you'll miss the deal if you're buying two tickets at once. But if you're flying with kids, best to keep their tickets on the same reservation as the accompanying adult in case of bumping or other issues.

• It may be cheaper to fly one way on one airline and return on another. Just remember that if your outgoing flight is canceled, you'll be stuck for the return on the other airline.

• Consider airport alternatives: Baltimore versus Washington; Newark versus Trenton, New Jersey; Boston versus Providence, Rhode Island.

• Hotel-airfare packages can be cheaper than booking flights and lodging separately. Look for deals on sites like Upside.com.

Scott Mayerowitz, AP's digital storytelling editor for business news and former airlines reporter, contributed to this story.