

# THE BUZZ



Isla Vista Food Co-op Nutrition Newsletter, March, 2013

**Medjool Dates!** *Phoenix dactylifera*, is classified as a "drupe" meaning it consists of an outer fleshy fruit encasing a pit. Native to the Middle East, this particular palm was the original cultivated crop, dating back to 8,000 B.C. The date spread from the Middle East to China, where it was picked up by pioneering Spaniards and brought to America. Earning the name "the King of Dates," Medjools are the largest, fleshiest variety of date, among the top sellers in the US.

## SO, WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF MEDJOOl DATES?

Whether boosting red blood cells, or simply indulging in a sweet treat, this naturally dried fruit is an excellent dietary staple.

### GET REGULAR:

With today's *Standard American Diet (SAD)* many people suffer from chronic constipation, the result of a diet deficient in fiber. Our bodies require a sufficient amount of dietary fiber to bulk up our stools, which triggers the colonic walls to contract. Without proper elimination, gastrointestinal (GI) diseases such as *diverticulosis* and *colorectal cancer* become a much greater risk. Dates can help with both constipation and diarrhea, due to their high concentration of fiber, specifically *Beta-D-Glucan*. This soluble fiber absorbs and holds water, easing

stool passage and elimination.

### MUSCLE FUNCTION:

Potassium is not stored within the body, therefore we must consume it on a regular basis. Potassium is an *electrolyte*, often grouped with sodium and chloride because together they maintain water balance and distribution, kidney & adrenal function, acid-base balance, and muscle & nerve function. Potassium is essential for preventing the swelling of cells and removing sodium via the *sodium-potassium pump*. This electrolyte exchange is also responsible for maintaining electrical charges within the cell, a precursor to nerve impulse and muscle contraction. We tend to get too much sodium and not enough potassium, which can lead to the development of cancer and cardio-

vascular diseases. Dates are an excellent dietary source of potassium, containing 167mg per date, (more than bananas!)

### ANTIOXIDANT:

Medjool dates are a good choice when battling against free-radicals due to their high concentration of polyphenols, powerful antioxidants that help fight cellular inflammation.

### A HEALTHY SNACK!

When it comes to snacking, dates can be considered a healthy choice. They have no added sugar, no fat or cholesterol, but still give you the satisfaction of eating something tasty and filling. Plus, being a naturally dried fruit, dates will keep at room temp for over a month.

## MAIN POINTS:

- Promote regularity
- Cellular function
- Source of minerals
- Antioxidant
- Keeps sodium in check
- Lower LDL (bad) cholesterol
- Provide satiety
- Alkalizing



## LET'S BE ALKALINE!

In order for our body to function properly, we must maintain the right balance of *acidity* and *alkalinity* (a.k.a. pH). The pH scale ranges from 0 to 14 with 0 being the most acidic (battery acid) and 14 being the most basic, or alkaline. Pure water falls directly in the middle with a pH of 7 (chlorinated water is more acidic). The human body has a couple different values associated with the pH level. Blood should hover around 7.41 (slightly

alkaline), while a healthy urine pH level can range from 4.5 to 8 (more acidic). How is this balance effected, and why does it matter? If your body is in an acidic state, it is more susceptible to disease and infection. Your body's pH can be altered by a number of things, most notably exercise and diet. Proper breathing techniques that provide adequate oxygen will help prevent buildup of lactic acid. What we put into our bodies it just as

important due to the fact that some foods are more acidic (or acid forming) and others more alkaline, depending on how they are metabolized. Animal products tend to have an acid-forming effect, while fruits and vegetables a more alkaline-forming balance. Medjool dates are an excellent example of an alkalizing food. The reason for this is because some of their acid content is oxidized in the drying process.

Did you know? Most conventional dates (*soft dates*) are picked unripe and then steamed soft. If possible, find a source that sells tree ripened dates, (*dried dates*) for fresher, higher quality! Check Farmer's Markets and small local health food stores. Tree ripened dates are much softer and more "gooey" so you might want to store them in the fridge to prevent further ripening.



# RECIPES

## Dream Date Smoothie

1 banana  
4 medjool dates, pitted  
1/2 C cashews (or almonds)  
Pinch of nutmeg  
1 tsp vanilla  
1/2 C ice  
1 1/2 C filtered water

Blend cashews, water, and vanilla before adding remaining ingredients. Enjoy.



## Date-licious Brownies

1/2 C coconut oil  
1 1/2 C Medjool dates, pitted  
1/3 C hot water  
1 TBS vanilla  
1 egg  
1/2 C raw cacao powder  
1 tsp sea salt  
3/4 tsp baking powder  
1 1/4 C spelt flour  
1/2 C dark chocolate chips  
1/2 C walnuts, chopped

Preheat oven to 350. Grease a 8x8" pan.

Melt coconut oil. In a medium bowl, blend dates with hot water, oil and vanilla using an electric mixer. Add egg. In a separate bowl, mix flour, baking soda, salt, and cacao.

Using a wooden spoon, stir dry ingredients into wet, adding chocolate chips and walnuts.

Pour into pan and bake for 30-35 minutes.

## Nuts on a Log



This is a great snack or dessert when you're on the go!

You will need:  
2-3 Medjool dates  
A handful of almonds

Split the dates in half, and remove the pit. Line the date "log" with 3 or 4 almonds. Yum!

## Raw Chocolate Mousse

1/4 C pitted Medjool dates, soaked in warm water  
1/4 C maple syrup  
1/2 tsp vanilla  
1 1/2 ripe avocados, mashed

1/4 C + 2 TBS raw cacao powder  
A pinch of sea salt

Drain water from dates and place in food processor along with maple syrup and vanilla. Blend until smooth.

Add avocado, cacao powder and sea salt. Process until creamy.

Top with fresh fruit or use as a frosting!

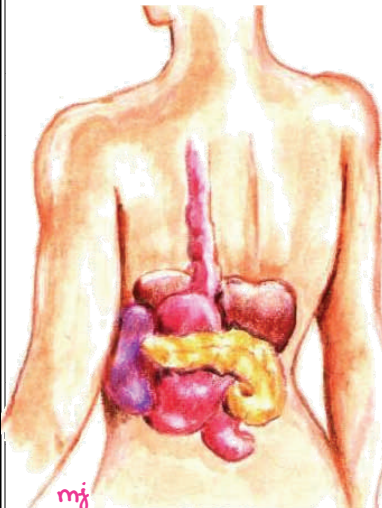
### Buzzy says:

This avocado mousse is so rich and creamy, people won't believe it's vegan! I like to use it to frost chocolate cake, or brownies.



## PANCREATIC HEALTH!

In the last 100 years, annual sugar consumption has increased from 10 pounds per person, to 150 pounds per person! Sugar now comes in highly refined forms such as granulated sugar, and high fructose corn syrup, and the scary part is, it is hidden in everything! Most packaged foods, drinks, crackers, cookies, chips, salad dressings and sauces list "sugar" as a main ingredient. Consuming refined sugar from all of these different sources has a cumulative effect that puts a great deal of stress on our pancreas.



What is a pancreas, you might ask? The pancreas is an important vital organ, shaped like a smoker's pipe (pictured in yellow), located behind your stomach, just below your liver. It acts as an endocrine gland, secreting the hormones *insulin* and *glucagon*, which are key to regulating blood glucose levels. When the pancreas is unhappy, we may experience blood sugar fluctuations, weight changes, bloating and nausea. Rapid absorption of sugar makes your pancreas work hard to pump out the insulin needed to convert it to glycogen. If

you subject your body to this regularly, adult-onset diabetes (type 2 diabetes) becomes much more likely. We can help ease stress on the pancreas by limiting our sugar intake, and paying attention to what kinds of sugars we are putting into our bodies. Replace refined sugars with natural options such as honey, stevia, or fruit. Medjool dates make an excellent sugar substitute for baking, and provide fiber in the process. Because they are a natural sugar, the glucose in dates is absorbed more slowly, helping keep blood sugar levels even, preventing the rapid spike and inevitable crash. When you want a sweet treat, reach for a Medjool date!

## ISLA VISTA FOOD CO-OP

OUR GOAL AS A CONSUMER CO-OP IS TO BE A TRUSTED SOURCE OF NATURAL & ORGANIC PRODUCTS AS WELL AS A RELIABLE SOURCE FOR CONSUMER INFORMATION, DRIVEN NOT BY PROFIT, BUT BY MOTIVATION FOR COMMUNITY AUTONOMY, MUTUAL AID, AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE.  
WWW.ISLAVISTAFOOD.COOP

Madia Jamgochian,  
Co-op Kitchen Manager &  
Nutrition Educator  
lvfc.deli@gmail.com

Phone: (805) 968-1401  
Fax: (805) 968-0202

6575 Seville Rd.  
Goleta, CA 93117

### Sources:

Mullin, MD. Gerard. *The Inside Tract*  
Murray, Michael. *The Encyclopedia of Healing Foods*  
Uphoff, Karin C. *Botanical Bodycare*