

Treats for Healthy Living



PAUL POPLIS/FOODPIX

Diabetics have good habits that we can all adopt in our New Year's commitment to healthier eating. The diabetic menu is not one of deprivation, but of balance. Here are some things that you can do to make yourself and your family healthier, whether or not any of you are diabetic:

- Cut out processed foods, especially white bread, potato chips and packaged sweets.
- Eat more whole grains like whole-wheat bread and brown rice.
- Eat plenty of fresh vegetables. They are "nutrient dense," meaning

they have essential vitamins, minerals and other nutrients our bodies need.

- Eat lean meats and have fish at least once a week.
- You don't have to cut out sugar altogether, but do balance your carbohydrates (sugars and starches). For instance, if you want to have a cookie with lunch, a low-carb soup or salad would be a better choice for lunch than a sandwich made with two pieces of bread.

Here are some recipes for sweets that will help you keep a healthy balance while satisfying your sweet tooth.

Chocolate Meringue Kisses

- 4 egg whites
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon cream of tartar
- 1 cup Splenda
- 3 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa

Preheat oven to 225 degrees. Put baking parchment on a cookie sheet. Beat egg whites until foamy. Add vanilla extract and cream of tartar slowly. Beat until soft peaks form. Add Splenda and cocoa a little at a time.

Using a pastry bag, pipe meringue onto parchment paper on cookie sheet or use a spoon to make rounded shapes. Bake 1 hour. Turn off oven, open oven door a crack, and cool 5 to 10 minutes. Remove from oven and allow to cool fully before removing from parchment paper. Makes 25-30 kisses.

Serving size: 2 kisses. Per serving: 90 calories, 2 grams protein, trace fat, 20 grams carbohydrates, 16 milligrams sodium, 0 milligrams cholesterol

Whole-Wheat Peanut Butter Cookies

- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1 cup peanut butter
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cups Splenda
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 3 cups whole-wheat flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1 teaspoon baking powder

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. In mixing bowl, cream butter and peanut butter together; add Splenda and blend well. Beat in eggs and vanilla. Sift dry ingredients into creamed mixture and mix thoroughly. The mixture should be crumbly. Form 1-inch balls with hands, place on cookie sheet, and press flat with fork. Bake 12 to 15 minutes. Makes about 4 dozen cookies.

Serving size: 1 cookie. Per serving: 132 calories, 3 grams protein, 7 grams fat, 16 grams carbohydrates, 152 milligrams sodium, 18 milligrams cholesterol

The subject for April's recipe contest is **Cast Iron Cooking**.

Every great Texas cook has at least one piece of cast iron cookware that is indispensable. What recipes do you make that just seem to demand your old reliable cast iron? You may send recipes to Home Cooking, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704. You may also fax them to (512) 486-6254 or e-mail them to recipes@texas-ec.org. Be sure to include your name, address and phone number, as well as the name of your electric co-op. The deadline is January 10. The top winner will receive a copy of the *Texas Co-op Power Cookbook* and a selection of spices from Adams. Others whose recipes are published will also receive a selection from Adams.

JAN MONCRIEF, a member of Houston County Electric Cooperative, sent in this month's winning recipe, Sugar-Free Mississippi Mud Pie. She writes, "I got the original recipe, made with real sugars, from a co-worker in the 1980s. When my husband was diagnosed with Type II diabetes in the 1990s, I converted this recipe—one of his favorites—to sugar-free so he could continue to enjoy it. Now that we have Splenda, it's even easier and tastier."

Sugar-Free Mississippi Mud Pie

Before starting, blend 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons of Splenda in a blender with 1 tablespoon cornstarch until the mixture has the consistency of traditional powdered sugar. Set aside for Steps 2 and 4.

Step 1:

- 1 cup flour
- ½ cup finely chopped pecans
- 1 stick butter, softened
- 2 tablespoons Splenda

Mix ingredients in Step 1 and spread in the bottom of a 9x13-inch pan and bake at 350 degrees until lightly brown. Cool completely.

Step 2:

- 1 cup Cool Whip

1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened to room temperature

1 cup Splenda powdered sugar (from above recipe)

1 teaspoon vanilla

Mix ingredients together until smooth and spread over cooled crust.

Step 3:

Prepare 1 small package of sugar-free chocolate pudding using 1¾ cups milk. Spread on top of the cream cheese mixture. Prepare 2 small packages (or 1 large package) of sugar-free vanilla pudding with 3½ cups milk. Spread on top of the chocolate pudding.

Step 4:

Completely cover top with Cool Whip and finely chopped pecans (optional). Dust top with remaining powdered sugar made from Splenda. As an added garnish, finely grate a very small piece of chocolate over top.

Refrigerate 1 to 2 hours to allow pudding to set.

Serving size: 1 serving spoonful. Per serving: 211 calories, 4 grams protein, 15 grams fat, 15 grams carbohydrates, 176 milligrams sodium, 37 milligrams cholesterol

Creamy Sugar-Free Sweet Potato Pie

3-4 large sweet potatoes (about 2¼ pounds)

½ cup butter or margarine, softened

2 cups Splenda

Egg substitute to equal 4 eggs

½ teaspoon salt

1 can (13 ounces) evaporated skim milk

½ teaspoon nutmeg

2 9-inch unbaked pie shells

Cook sweet potatoes in boiling water until fork easily pierces potatoes. Cool and remove skins. Place potatoes in a large mixing bowl and beat with electric mixer until smooth. There should be about 3½ cups of potatoes. Stir in butter and sweetener. Add egg substitute, salt, milk and nutmeg. Pour mixture into unbaked pie crusts. Place pans on cookie sheet. Bake at 425 degrees for 20 minutes, then lower heat to 325 degrees. Bake 30 to 45 minutes or until knife inserted near center comes out clean.

Serving size: 1 slice. Per serving: 295 calories, 10 grams protein, 17 grams fat, 25 grams carbohydrates, 475 milligrams sodium, 22 milligrams cholesterol

CAROLYN COATS, Rusk County EC



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