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Dark Chocolate Nut Butter Bars...and how I'm choosy with my chocolate

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Chocolate. Love. Ohhhh…they just go together like coffee and cream or like pumpkin and pie or like sweet potatoes and a pad of real butter. Need I say more? *Chocolate holds my heart's hand and every time I come up with a new concoction, it has me smitten all over again!*

I LOVE chocolate. I'll be honest, I eat some every single day. I'm a dark chocolate girl so even a few small morsels taste like bittersweet, indulgent perfection.

Light chocolate feels waxy and tastes too sweet to me.

White….well, I don't consider the washed out, white stuff chocolate at all. Sorry, friends!

For me, dark chocolate just does it. In the afternoon with a piping hot cup of coffee or tea. In the evening with a petite pour of red wine, alternating soothing sips with delicious nibbles.

My relationship with chocolate has developed and grown to maturity over the years. I no longer accept just any rendition. It needs to meet my specifications. I mean, come on! ***Part of growing up means only making room in your life for the real deal, right?*** That applies to chocolate, too (and as far as I'm concerned, it applies to everything we eat…and, well, whatever we engage in relationships with! Anyways, I digress…).

So, here's how I suggest being CHOOSEY with CHOCOLATE:

- **At least 70% cocoa content**: The higher the percentage, the MORE nutrient dense cocoa mass and less space is wasted on the schwaggy stuff like refined sugar, processed oils and flavorings. If the package does not list the percent, don't buy it!
- **Read the ingredients:** Really HIGH quality chocolate only contains a few ingredients: chocolate, cocoa bean, cocoa mass, cocoa liquor, sugar (organic preferably), ONLY REAL natural flavors if any at all (like pure vanilla, espresso beans, mint leaf, etc.). If the list includes oils, emulsifiers, lecithin or milk products, you're not getting the best of the best (and for me, to really LOVE something, I need the best of the best!)

- **Buy organic when you can:** Cocoa plants are one of the most highly sprayed crops in the world. That means that pesticide residues are left on the final product...unless you buy organic. For someone like me who eats it every day, that becomes an issue.
- **Consider the process:** So, this might require more work than you're willing to commit. BUT, putting a little leg work into any relationship really pays off! If the cocoa beans are dried in the sun instead of roasted, the final product will contain MANY more of the nutrients chocolate is known for, like antioxidants and polyphenols. Also, 'Dutching' is a process that actually purposefully removes polyphenols in order to result in a more bitter taste.
- **Consider its impact:** Who wants to love something that hurts someone!? Not me. That's why I only keep company with fair trade chocolate, even if it's not organic. Cocoa farmers and their families often work for low wages and can suffer poor working conditions. Fair trade is a certification that ensures farmers are paid and treated properly AND the environment is protected.

So, there you have it! My love affair with chocolate defined...and now, it's been redefined in this indulgent, not-too-sweet but certainly delicious cakey bar!

Recipe category

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Ingredients

- 4 large, organic eggs
- 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 2 cups unsalted nut butter* (SEE RECIPE NOTES)
- 1 ½ cup coconut sugar
- 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon fine grain sea salt (for in the batter)
- 8 ounces dark chocolate (at least 70%)**(See recipe notes)
- 1 teaspoon coarser grain sea salt--OPTIONAL (pink Himalayan works well)

Recipe Instructions

- Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Prepare a 9x13 pan with parchment paper (this is so you can lift them out of the pan to slice, but not necessary. If you don't plan have any, butter or spray the pan well.)
- In a small bowl, whisk the eggs and vanilla together.
- In another small bowl, whisk together the coconut sugar, baking soda and fine grain salt.
- In another, larger bowl stir together your nut butter (or combination of nut butters). Add the egg mixture and stir thoroughly. This will take a bit of stirring to really mix it up and create a nice, thick consistency.
- Add the sugar mixture and mix well again. This will create a thick batter. Add about HALF of the chocolate and mix evenly into the batter. (I had to use my hands.)
- Press the dough into the lined or greased pan. Sprinkle the remaining chocolate over the top (see photo). Sprinkle the coarse salt on top (optional).
- Bake for between 30 and 35 minutes. The bars will rise to an almost-cakey appearance and turn darker/golden. Remove from oven and allow to cool completely before cutting or lifting out of the

pan.

- I froze part of the batch, with parchment between layers. That way we have treats that last!
- ENJOY!

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Recipe Description

Antioxidants, polyphenols, good fats, protein….it’s all in this indulgent little bar. Need I

say more?! (Oh, maybe you'd like to know it's gluten and grain free, made with only the BEST of the BEST!)

Recipe Notes

*I have used two combinations for these bars. Pictured, I used 1 cup raw almond butter and 1 cup natural organic peanut butter. I have also used 1 cup raw almond butter and 1 cup hazelnut butter. BOTH are delicious and bake well. I personally prefer the hazelnut combo...but your kids may enjoy the peanut butter combo.

**I used a combination of 70% and 80% chocolate bars (a 4 ounce bar of each). You can change this to your liking. If you prefer chips to chopping your own chunks, I suggest buying Enjoy Life dark chocolate chips. But, I love the chunkiness for the palate and the presentation with these.

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