



INGREDIENTS

SERVES 4-8

200g pitted Medjool dates - chopped

100ml boiling water (used to soak the dates)

1 very ripe banana - mashed

50g wholemeal rye flour

25g ground almonds

75g unsweetened cocoa powder (or raw cocoa powder)

130g unsalted butter

2 teaspoons fennel seeds

2 large free-range eggs

1 teaspoon vanilla bean paste

100g almonds - roughly chopped

SUGAR-FREE DATE, ALMOND, FENNEL SEED AND BANANA BROWNIES

By Dominic Franks at www.belleaukitchen.com

It's undeniable that sugar-free baking can be a little complex, with lots of ingredients needed to enhance the texture and flavour you lose when not using refined sugar. Although these substitute ingredients aren't rare, they're not your usual store cupboard regulars. I was keen to go back to basics with this recipe. I've tried to create something that was simple, had mostly ingredients that you'd be likely to have in your cupboards already, but still sugar-free and of course, ultimately tasty. These brownies really hit the spot. Not only are they divine, they are also super-easy to make.

METHOD

Preheat the oven to 180°C/160C fan/Gas Mark 4. Grease and line the base and sides of a 20cm square cake tin.

Place the chopped dates in a bowl, pour over the boiling water and leave to soak for about 15 minutes.

Gently melt the butter in a small pan along with the fennel seeds so the flavour infuses into the butter.

After the dates have been soaking for 15 minutes, spoon them into a blender or food processor, along with the banana and blitz until they are shredded. Then pour in the melted butter and fennel seeds.

Next, add the two eggs and vanilla bean paste to the food processor and blitz. Then add the flour, cocoa powder and the ground almonds. Blitz again until you have a thick glossy paste. This can also be done in a large mixing bowl if a food processor isn't available.

Finally, stir in 2/3rds of the chopped almonds, being careful not to break them up too much. Now spoon the mixture into the brownie tin. Sprinkle the remaining almonds on top.

Bake for 15 - 20 minutes until the top is firm to the touch - set aside on a wire rack to cool completely in the tin, then cut into squares.

Eat and of course, enjoy.

