

From Chef Fran Costigan

Date Paste

Fruit pastes are made by soaking dried fruit in water, often with spices or citrus zest, then pureeing the thick mixture until smooth. Commonly made from dried dates, figs, apricots or mangoes, fruit pastes are staple ingredients in a plant-based kitchen.

These pastes can be used in many ways to sweeten and enrich foods: spooned on top of morning grains, a dollop placed in smoothies and desserts, whisked into a filling or sauce. Prepare the paste as thick as possible and then thin as needed according to the recipe or application.

Having a fruit paste available means easy access to better-for-you sweetness that can be used time and time again. In addition to sweetness, pastes also bring forth rich, concentrated flavors that come from using the whole fruit.

Fruit pastes not only offer sweetness, but also nutrients from the dried, whole fruits. Some of these nutrients, such as chromium, magnesium and fiber, can help the body process sugar more effectively, which helps balance blood sugar.

- 1/2 cup dried fruit of choice
- • 1 cup water (or as needed)
- • 1 vanilla bean, optional or add 2 teaspoons vanilla extract

Description

To make a paste-like mixture, soak the dried fruit for 1 to 2 hours or until quite soft. Transfer to a high-speed blender and process until smooth. Add water only as needed to create the consistency you need.

This mixture will keep for over a week, covered and refrigerated. Alternatively, it can be frozen for several months. It will not freeze solid which facilitates scooping out exact amounts.

Note: For a different flavor note, add a pinch of ground spice, such as cinnamon or nutmeg, or sea salt along with a bit of fresh lemon juice.

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