



Halloween party treats don't always have to be those highly processed, calorie-rich items from the store

You can substantially reduce the amounts of fats, cholesterol and high-fructose corn syrup in treats by making your own out of a wide selection of natural foods.

Here are a few worth trying.

## **GRANOLA BARS**

2 cups rolled oats

3/4 cup packed brown sugar

1/2 cup wheat germ

3/4 teaspoon cinnamon

1 cup all-purpose flour

3/4 cup raisins (optional)

3/4 teaspoon salt

1/2 cup honey

1 egg, beaten

1/2 cup vegetable oil

2 teaspoons vanilla extract

Preheat the oven to 350°F. □

Generously grease a 9x13-inch baking pan.

In a large bowl, mix together the oats, brown sugar, wheat germ, cinnamon, flour, raisins and salt. Make a well in the center, and pour in the honey, egg, oil and vanilla. Mix well using your hands. Pat the mixture evenly into the prepared pan.

Bake for 30 to 35 minutes in the preheated oven, until the bars begin to turn golden at the edges. Cool for 5 minutes, then cut into bars while still warm. Do not allow the bars to cool completely before cutting, or they will be too hard to cut. Makes 24 bars.

## **CINNAMON CANDY APPLES**

8 apples

8 wooden skewers

2 cups granulated sugar

1 cup light corn syrup

1/2 cup hot water

1/2 cup red cinnamon candies, like Red Hots

Prepare a baking sheet by lining it with aluminum foil and spraying the foil with nonstick cooking spray.

Wash and dry the apples carefully. Remove the stems, and stick the skewers firmly in the stem

ends.

Combine the water, corn syrup and sugar in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat. Stir until the sugar dissolves, then continue to cook, without stirring, until mixture reaches 250°F. Wash down the sides of the pan with a wet pastry brush occasionally to prevent crystallization.

Once the candy reaches 250°F, add the cinnamon candies and stir briefly to incorporate. Continue to cook, washing down the sides, until it reaches 285°F.

Remove from the heat and stir the candy so that it is smooth and even. Hold an apple by the skewer and dip it in the candy, tilting the pan at an angle and rotating the apple to cover it completely with a smooth, even layer. Bring it out of the candy and twirl it to remove excess, then set it on the prepared baking sheet. Repeat with remaining apples.

Allow apples to cool at room temperature. Candy apples are best enjoyed within 24 hours.

## **CARAMEL APPLES**

1/3 cup packed light brown sugar

1/4 cup agave nectar

2 tablespoons butter

1/8 teaspoon salt

3 tablespoons chopped unsalted nuts

6 small apples

Line a baking sheet with wax paper and coat with cooking spray. Coat a tablespoon measure with cooking spray.

Combine brown sugar, agave, butter and salt in a small saucepan. Place over medium heat; as

soon as the syrup starts to lightly bubble around the edges, cook, stirring constantly, for 1 minute more. Add nuts and cook, stirring constantly, until the sugar is melted and the mixture darkens, about 1 minute. Remove from the heat.

Working quickly, spoon about 1 tablespoon of caramel over each apple. Repeat, spooning another tablespoon of caramel over each apple, turning as you pour.

Let cool on the baking sheet for 5 minutes. Insert popsicle/craft sticks into the tops. Press any stray strands of caramel back onto the apples. Let cool for at least 30 minutes.

### **PEANUT BUTTER COOKIES**

3/4 cup whole wheat flour

1/4 cup brown sugar

3/4 cup oats

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/2 teaspoon baking soda

1 teaspoon cinnamon (optional)

1-1/4 cups natural peanut butter

1/2 cup honey

1 egg

1 teaspoons vanilla

Combine first 6 dry ingredients.

Combine last 4 moist ingredients and mix dry and moist ingredients together.



Cool in the refrigerator for 20 minutes, then drop teaspoons of batter on a parchment-lined cookie sheet. Flatten with a fork, if you like.

Bake at 375°F for 8-12 minutes (edges will be slightly browned; be careful not to burn, as honey browns fast.)

## **CHOCOLATE PRETZEL & CHERRY POPCORN BALLS**

6 heaping cups popped corn

1/4 cup agave nectar or honey

1/4 cup natural peanut butter, at room temperature

2 tablespoons finely chopped dark chocolate-covered pretzels

2 tablespoons finely chopped dried cherries

Line a baking sheet with parchment or wax paper. Prepare a medium bowl of ice water. Put popcorn in a large bowl.

Combine agave (or honey) and peanut butter in a small saucepan. Cook over medium heat, stirring gently but constantly. As soon as the mixture starts to lightly bubble, cook, stirring constantly, for 15 seconds more.

Immediately pour the mixture evenly over the popcorn; gently mix with a wooden spoon or spatula until well coated. Gently stir in dark-chocolate-covered pretzels and finely chopped dried cherries.

Dip both hands in the ice water. Working quickly, press small handfuls (heaping 1/4 cup each) of the popcorn mixture firmly into 2-inch balls. (Make sure each ball gets a little bit of the pretzels and dried cherries.) Place the balls on the prepared baking sheet. If they seem too fragile, rinse hands with cold water and press and squeeze each ball again to help keep it together.

## **There's No Trick to Making Healthier Halloween Treats**

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Let cool completely before storing. To store, individually wrap in plastic wrap and store in an airtight container. Makes a dozen balls.