



Chocolate slice

It's not just the decadent flavours of this slice that will lift your mood – so too will its magnesium and B vitamins.

🕒 Prep time: 20-25 minutes. Setting time: 15-20 minutes

Vegan, wheat free

Ingredients

1½ cups rolled oats

⅓ cup each of hemp seeds, unhulled sesame seeds and pepitas (pumpkin seeds)

1 cup raw Brazil nuts

2 cups pitted dates

¾ cup raw cacao

¼ cup ABC (almond, Brazil and cashew) nut spread (from health food store, or supermarket health food section)

¼ cup pure maple syrup



Method

Process Brazil nuts in a food processor until they become a coarse meal. Remove from bowl, set aside. Add dates and process for 1-2 minutes, until they form large clumps. Add Brazil nut meal and raw cocoa to dates, process to combine.

Transfer mixture to large mixing bowl, add oats, seeds and pepitas, and use your hands to combine the mixture well.

In a small saucepan, warm the ABC spread and maple syrup over low heat until melted, combined and pourable. Do not let it boil. Add to oat mixture, mix thoroughly with metal spoon, or your hands if you can (I use food-handling gloves to better combine the mixture).

Press mixture evenly and firmly into a slice tin lined with baking paper. Cover slice with another sheet of baking paper and press down firmly to even out the top. Freeze for 15-20 minutes to set. Lift slice out of tin and cut into small snack-size bars or bite-sized squares (they are very filling).

Store in an airtight container in the freezer or fridge to keep them fresh, as they become a little sticky when left out at room temperature.



Recipe by
Sandra Vilella
Jean Hailes
naturopath



Chocolate slice cont'd

Nutritional information

Why do so many women crave chocolate around the time of their periods? Popular, but largely debunked theories include fluctuations in hormone levels and deficiencies of nutrients, such as magnesium, around menstrual cycles. More recently, research has shifted towards the theory that premenstrual chocolate cravings in Western woman are associated with the 'allowing' of otherwise taboo or forbidden foods, justified by menstruation or premenstrual syndrome (PMS).

Whatever the reason, this slice satisfies the chocolate craving while giving you a good dose of nutrients that are thought to be lacking, or required, to help keep your mood even – in particular, magnesium and vitamin B6.

There is not much good research to support a role for magnesium in managing PMS, but there have been observations between low magnesium levels and anxiety in humans.

Luckily some of the best dietary sources of magnesium are seeds (hemp, pepitas and linseeds) and nuts, especially Brazil nuts. So, hemp seeds and Brazil nuts are in this recipe for that reason.

Raw cacao is here too as it also contains magnesium; slightly more than cocoa powder. The unhulled sesame seeds in this recipe provide some calcium, a mineral known to be useful for PMS management when taken as a supplement. Seeds, nuts and wholegrains also provide some B vitamins.

One of the theories of the cause of PMS is an interaction of hormones from the ovaries with chemicals from the brain (neurotransmitters) such as serotonin. The B vitamins are involved in the metabolism of these brain chemicals through different mechanisms, so dietary sources (or in some cases, nutritional supplements) are important in this process.

However you slice or dice it, this chocolate slice is not only a good-mood food, but a high-fibre treat that's packed with nutrient-dense ingredients, giving you a chocolate 'high' without the unhealthy fats or refined sugars.