

**Cooking with Gratitude: Holiday Treats**  
**- RAW VEGAN SNICKER BARS -**

*These can be made gluten free and vegan (dairy/egg free) by using nondairy milk and non-allergen chips.*

*NOTE: This recipe calls for medjool dates, which are large, very moist and sticky. They are available at Aldis, Woodman's, Costco and other grocers. If you cannot find medjool dates, regular pitted whole dates (which are more firm, dry, fibrous) can be used. However, before using them, coarsely chop them and soak them in enough hot water to cover them for about 15 minutes to hydrate them. Drain and use as called for in recipe.*

**Ingredients**

**Crust:**

- 1 ½ cups nuts, such as cashews, almonds, walnuts in any combo
- ½ cup shredded unsweetened coconut
- 6-7 medjool dates, pitted
- Water as needed to make crust moist

**Filling:**

- ¼ cup peanut or almond butter
- 8 medjool dates, pitted
- 3-4 Tbsp milk, non-dairy such as oat, coconut, soy, almond as needed for smooth caramel texture
- Dash of salt
- ½ cup salted peanuts

**Topping:**

- 1 cup dark or semisweet chocolate chips (if vegan or avoiding dairy, use non allergen chips)
- 1 tablespoon coconut oil or if dairy is not an issue, use butter

Line an 8" x 8" or 9" x 9" pan with parchment paper, leaving enough sticking up on 2 sides to lift bars out of pan. (The bigger pan size will create thinner bars.)

In a food processor combine nuts of choice, coconut and dates and process until mealy and crumbly. Add enough water one spoon at a time until it forms a dough that just sticks together. Press this crust mixture into bottom of paper lined pan in an even layer.

In same food processor bowl (no need to wash it!) combine the nut butter, dates, salt, and a few tablespoons of the milk. Process until pasty, then slowly add additional milk until the mixture becomes a smooth caramel like mixture. This may take a few minutes, but it should be spreadable, not runny. Spread this over the crust, then sprinkle with peanuts. Press them down lightly into the caramel so they do not roll around.

Melt the chocolate chips and coconut oil in a glass bowl in microwave using short 20 second bursts and stirring well between. Stop when chips are almost all melted and then stir gently until completely melted and smooth. Pour over peanuts and caramel and spread into an even layer. Chill for about an hour in refrigerator or until you can just score cutting lines in the chocolate with a sharp knife so cutting the bars later is easier. Chill another hour or two until firm. Cut into squares. Store in refrigerator since they soften quite a bit at room temperature. Makes 12 bars.

**Cooking with Gratitude: Holiday Treats**  
**- ARTICHOKE SPINACH RED PEPPER DIP**

*You can enjoy this cold or warm and melty!*

**Ingredients**

- 8 oz reduced fat Cream cheese or Neufchatel cheese, softened
- ¼ cup reduced fat mayo, such as Hellmans
- ¼ cup low fat plain Greek Yogurt
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- 2 green onions, thinly sliced with most of greens
- ½ cup red bell pepper, in small dice
- 1/2 cup shredded carrot
- 1 cup packed fresh spinach leaves, chopped small
- 14 oz. can water packed artichoke hearts, approximately half the can
- ¼ cup shredded Italian blend cheese

In a medium bowl, stir cream cheese until smooth. Beat in the mayo, yogurt, and garlic powder until smooth. Stir in the green onion, bell pepper, carrot and chopped spinach. Drain the artichokes and place half of them on cutting board, then roughly chop them. (You can use the rest on a salad or added to pasta.) Stir the chopped artichokes and shredded cheese into the dip and mix well. Serve as is or chill briefly before serving cold with chips, crackers, or French bread slices.

To enjoy it warm...spread dip in a shallow small casserole dish or a 9" baking pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 15 minutes or until bubbly hot. Serve warm with same kind of dippers.

LEFTOVERS: This makes a great spread in a tortilla wrap or mixed with hot pasta!