

No-added-sugar baking

Shelley Howell tells us about her quest to find sweet treats with no added sugar, and shares some of the recipes from her new book.



My personal experience of living with M.E. for more than 15 years has taught me the benefits of healthy eating and, in particular for me, the positive daily effects of having less added sugar. I love puddings and sweet treats but found it almost impossible to buy these without added sugar or artificial sweeteners in the 1990s. Consequently I have spent many hours in the following years creating and developing my own versions.

Now that I am able to work part-time and have energy to do other things, I have put together a collection of my recipes that contain no added sugar or sweeteners. I hope this will fill a gap in terms of accessing suitable recipes and that others will try them, enjoy them and find health benefits, too.

It goes without saying that I have tried and tested all the recipes – as have some of my closest friends and

family who have given me very honest feedback over the years.

Why no sugar?

Not all sugar is bad. It's just a case of knowing how best to eat them and in what context. My recipes contain natural fruit sugars which, when eaten whole with the pulp and fibre of the fruit itself, slow down the digestion and absorption of the sugars.

The following recipes are taken from my e-book, *Natural baking for a healthier you*. It costs £6.50 which includes a donation to Action for M.E. as I thought it was appropriate to support an organisation which has supported me in difficult times.

You can download Shelley's book at her website, www.thefreefromcoach.co.uk

Microwave sponge pudding

Just yummy. If you prefer lighter fruits try apple, pear or peach with apricot, fig or kumquat fruit spread.

- two heaped tablespoons mixed red berry fruits (fresh or frozen), thawed
- two heaped dessertspoons strawberry fruit spread (no added sugar)
- 50g butter or dairy free spread
- 50g plain flour
- one egg
- one teaspoon baking powder
- 25g raisins
- butter or spread to grease pudding basin

Add fruit spread and red berries to a pan and warm through on a low heat.

Warm butter/spread until softened and mix in flour, beaten egg and baking powder incorporating as much air as possible.

Beat with spoon or in mixer until it forms a smooth batter.

Stir in raisins.

Grease 850ml plastic pudding basin.

Strain fruits – keeping juice aside for later – and add fruit to bottom of pudding basin making a little hollow in the fruit mix and spreading it a little way up the sides of the basin (This will help the pudding mix to cook through at the bottom).

Spoon mixed batter over the fruit.

Cover tightly with cling film and pierce this a couple of times with a fork to let out the steam whilst cooking.

Cook on high power for three minutes (850W) and leave to stand for one minute before turning out onto serving plate.

Spoon over remaining juice and serve warm.



Apple, raisin and cinnamon cookies

Is it a cake or is it a biscuit? It's a little mouthful that's moist and chewy with a fruit topping – and great with a cuppa. Makes 10.

- 75g plain flour
- 30g oats
- 40g raisins or currants
- 60g butter or dairy free spread
- one medium egg
- one vanilla pod, scraped for seeds
- one baking apple, large enough to make 140g apple puree
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- one dessertspoon no added sugar apricot spread
- a pinch of salt
- 10 small fruit pieces for decoration

Peel, core and chop cooking apple into small pieces.

Add fruit spread and 1 dessertspoon of water and cook either in microwave or in pan on low heat until soft and fruit forms puree when mashed.

Mix softened butter with beaten egg, seeds from vanilla pod and 70g of the cooked apple.

In separate bowl mix flour, oats, baking powder, cinnamon, salt and raisins.

Stir into apple mix.

Place spoonfuls of cookie mixture onto greased tray and neaten into circles of mix and flatten slightly.

Bake at 200C/400F/gas mark six for 17-20 minutes until cooked and browned.

Whilst still warm make a little hollow in the top of each cookie with the back of a teaspoon and add 1 teaspoon of remainder of apple puree mix.

Decorate with small fruit piece on top of apple puree topping.



Toasted scones

When toasted, scones will have a slightly different taste. Serve with a little mashed banana for a little extra sweetness and gooiness. Makes three.

- 45g plain flour
- 20g brown rice flour
- 15g ground almonds
- 20g dairy free spread/butter
- one level teaspoon baking powder
- a pinch of salt
- 40g raisins
- two tablespoons warmed milk or water
- beaten egg to glaze

Sieve flours and baking powder, and add ground almonds and salt.

Rub in dairy free spread until like breadcrumbs.

Add raisins. Mix together with warmed milk (or water) until evenly distributed and mix forms a dough.

Flatten with hands onto a floured surface until approximately 3/8" (1cm) thickness.

Cut three scones with cutter and place onto baking parchment. Glaze tops with beaten egg.

Bake at 220C/425F/gas mark seven for 12-15 minutes.

When cool cut through into halves and place under hot grill to toast.

Spread with butter or dairy free spread and eat warm (with mashed banana if preferred).



Chocolate brownie moments

Serve warm or cold with tea and strawberries (or just nibble for a sweet treat!). Makes 12 small biscuits.

- 40g plain flour
- 25g pure cocoa powder
- 25g ground almonds
- 25g dairy free spread or butter, plus 25g melted
- 50g grated cooked beetroot
- 40g raisins
- one teaspoon baking powder
- a pinch of salt
- 50g chopped dates

Rub 25g fat into flour, cocoa powder, ground almonds, baking powder and salt.

Add raisins, dates and grated beetroot. Mix.

Add melted fat and mix to form moist, chocolatey dough.

Flatten out by hand on working surface to ¼" (6mm) thickness.

Cut out with biscuit cutter and place on baking parchment.

Chill in fridge for 30 minutes.

Bake at 220C/425F/gas mark 7 for 10 minutes.

Suppliers of no-added-sugar fruit spreads

SuperJam. Tel: 0845 644 576. www.superjam.co.uk

Wilkin & Sons. Tel: 0800 328 1749. www.tiptree.com

The Wooden Spoon Preserving Co. Tel: 01233 812251. www.thewoodenspoon.co.uk

St Dalfour (based in France; widely available). www.stdalfour.com