

# No Bake Energy Bars

## Ingredients

- 1 and ¼ cups crisp rice cereal
- 1 cup packed soft dates soaked in 1 cup of hot water
- 1 cup uncooked quick-cooking oats
- 2 tablespoons ground flaxseed (flaxseed meal)
- ¼ cup finely chopped dried fruit (e.g., raisins, dried cranberries, dried cherries, etc.)
- ¼ cup finely chopped nuts or seeds (pepitas are great)
- ⅓ cup maple syrup or brown rice syrup (or honey if not strictly vegan)
- ½ cup nut or seed butter of your choice (e.g., peanut butter, almond butter, sunflower seed butter)
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Optional: ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon

## Instructions

1. Combine the rice cereal, oats, flaxseed meal, dried fruit, and nuts in a large bowl.
2. Combine the syrup and nut butter in a small saucepan over medium heat, stirring until melted and well-blended (alternatively microwave in small microwave-safe bowl 30-60 seconds until melted). Stir in vanilla until blended.
3. Drain dates and puree in food processor or mash with fork and stir into honey and nut butter mixture
4. Pour nut butter mixture over cereal mixture, stirring until coated (use a wooden spoon at first, then get your hands in it. It will be sticky, but this way you can really coat everything. Just scrape off your hands when you're done).
5. Press mixture firmly into an 8-inch square pan (sprayed with nonstick cooking spray) using a large square of wax paper (really tamp it down).
6. Cool in pan on a wire rack, then chill at least 30 minutes to help it set.
7. Cut into 12 bars. (Wrap bars tightly in plastic wrap and store in the refrigerator).

## Notes

## **Variations**

**Will You Cherry Me?** Use chopped dried tart cherries for the fruit and lightly salted roasted almonds for the nuts. Use any nut butter (almond butter is great, but I know, a bit pricey--but worth it!), and add ¼ teaspoon almond extract.

**Apple Pie:** Use chopped dried apples for the fruit and rice syrup or honey for the syrup. Be sure to add the cinnamon option and use toasted walnuts or pecans for the nuts.

**Chocolate Chip Cookie:** Replace the dried fruit with an equal amount of semisweet miniature chocolate chips (or cacao nibs, or carob chips). Combine the cereal mixture with the syrup mixture, then let the combined mixture stand 10 minutes before adding the chips.

**Pepita-Cranberry:** Use chopped cranberries for the dried fruit and raw pepitas for the nuts/seeds. Use either honey or brown rice syrup.

**Peanut Butter Cookie:** Use chopped dates for the dried fruit and dry roasted peanuts for the nuts. Use honey, or half honey-half molasses for the syrup and peanut butter for the nut butter.

For more protein add whey protein powder up to 1/3 cup.