

Almond Granola with Dried Fruit

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Store-bought granola suffers from many shortcomings. It's often loose and gravelly and/or infuriatingly expensive. We wanted to make our own granola at home, with big, satisfying clusters and crisp texture. The secret was to firmly pack the granola mixture into a rimmed baking sheet before baking. Once it was baked, we had a granola "bark" that we could break into crunchy clumps of any size.

Makes about 9 cups

Chopping the almonds by hand is the first choice for superior texture and crunch. If you prefer not to hand chop, substitute an equal quantity of slivered or sliced almonds. (A food processor does a lousy job of chopping whole nuts evenly.) Use a single type of your favorite dried fruit or a combination. Do not use quick oats.

Ingredients

- 1/3 cup maple syrup (3 3/4 ounces, or 104g)
- 1/3 cup packed light brown sugar (2 1/3 ounces, or 66g)
- 4 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 5 cups old-fashioned rolled oats
- 1 bag of sliced raw almonds (10 ounces, or 283g)
- 1 1/2 cups raisins or other dried fruit, chopped

Instructions

1. Adjust oven rack to upper-middle position and heat oven to 325 degrees. Line rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Whisk maple syrup, brown sugar, vanilla, and salt in large bowl. Whisk in oil. Fold in oats and almonds until thoroughly coated.
3. Transfer oat mixture to prepared baking sheet and spread across sheet into thin, even layer (about 3/8 inch thick). Use second baking pan (or a metal spatula) to compress oat mixture until very compact. Bake until lightly browned, 46 minutes, rotating pan once halfway through baking.
4. Remove granola from oven and cool on wire rack to room temperature, about 1 hour. Break cooled granola into pieces of desired size. Stir in dried fruit. Granola can be stored in airtight container for up to 2 weeks.

RAG notes:

- For the vegetable oil, I used 1/3 cup EVO with canola oil for the remaining 1/6 cup
- For the oats, I use 2 cups of Red Mill thick cut oats, 3 cups of Quaker oats
- For the chopped fruit, I use 1/2 cup each of regular and golden raisins, and 1/2 cup of dried cherries
- Use old thinner / lighter baking pan for more crisp results

ORIGINAL Ingredients

- 1/3 cup maple syrup
- 1/3 cup packed light brown sugar (2 1/3 ounces)
- 4 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 5 cups old-fashioned rolled oats
- 2 cups raw almonds , chopped coarse (10 ounces)
- 2 cups raisins or other dried fruit, chopped

Step-by-Step

Keys to Chunkier Granola



PRESS DOWN

Spread oat mixture onto parchment-lined baking sheet. Press it firmly with spatula to create compact layer.



BAKE BUT DON'T STIR

Bake granola at 325 degrees for 40 to 45 minutes. Rotate pan halfway through baking but don't stir.



BREAK UP

Break cooled granola "bark" into pieces as large as you'd like.

For Better Granola, Add Fat

When we mixed up a batch of granola in which we left out the oil, the resulting cereal was a real flop, the oats having taken on a crisp but overly dry consistency. It turns out that fat is essential for creating a likable crispness.

Here's why: When the water in a viscous liquid sweetener (like the maple syrup in our recipe) evaporates in the heat of the oven, the sugars left behind develop into a thin coating on the oats and nuts. But without any fat, the sugar coating will become brittle and dry. Only oil can provide a pleasantly crisp coating with a sense of moistness.

Hazelnut Granola with Dried Pear

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Makes about 9 cups

Chopping the almonds by hand is the first choice for superior texture and crunch. If you prefer not to hand chop, substitute an equal quantity of slivered or sliced almonds. (A food processor does a lousy job of chopping whole nuts evenly.) Use a single type of your favorite dried fruit or a combination. Do not use quick oats.

Ingredients

- 1/3 cup maple syrup
- 1/3 cup packed light brown sugar (2 1/3 ounces, or 66g)
- 4 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 5 cups old-fashioned rolled oats
- 2 cups skinned hazelnuts, chopped coarse (10 ounces, or 283g)
- 2 cups dried pears, chopped

Instructions

1. Adjust oven rack to upper-middle position and heat oven to 325 degrees. Line rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Whisk maple syrup, brown sugar, vanilla, and salt in large bowl. Whisk in oil. Fold in oats and hazelnuts until thoroughly coated.
3. Transfer oat mixture to prepared baking sheet and spread across sheet into thin, even layer (about 3/8 inch thick). Using stiff metal spatula, compress oat mixture until very compact. Bake until lightly browned, 40 to 45 minutes, rotating pan once halfway through baking. Remove granola from oven and cool on wire rack to room temperature, about 1 hour. Break cooled granola into pieces of desired size. Stir in dried pears. (Granola can be stored in airtight container for up to 2 weeks.)

Tropical Granola with Dried Mango

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Makes about 9 cups

Chopping the almonds by hand is the first choice for superior texture and crunch. If you prefer not to hand chop, substitute an equal quantity of slivered or sliced almonds. (A food processor does a lousy job of chopping whole nuts evenly.) Use a single type of your favorite dried fruit or a combination. Do not use quick oats.

Ingredients

- 1/3 cup maple syrup
- 1/3 cup packed light brown sugar (2 1/3 ounces, or 66g)
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1 1/2 teaspoons ground ginger
- 3/4 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 4 cups old-fashioned rolled oats
- 1 1/2 cups unsweetened shredded coconut
- 2 cups macadamia nuts, chopped coarse (10 ounces, or 283g)
- 2 cups chopped dried mango or pineapple

Instructions

1. Adjust oven rack to upper-middle position and heat oven to 325 degrees. Line rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Whisk maple syrup, brown sugar, vanilla, ground ginger, nutmeg, and salt in large bowl. Whisk in oil. Fold in oats, coconut, and macadamia nuts until thoroughly coated.
3. Transfer oat mixture to prepared baking sheet and spread across sheet into thin, even layer (about 3/8 inch thick). Using stiff metal spatula, compress oat mixture until very compact. Bake until lightly browned, 40 to 45 minutes, rotating pan once halfway through baking. Remove granola from oven and cool on wire rack to room temperature, about 1 hour. Break cooled granola into pieces of desired size. Stir in dried mango or pineapple. (Granola can be stored in airtight container for up to 2 weeks.)

Spiced Walnut Granola with Dried Apple

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Makes about 9 cups

Chopping the almonds by hand is the first choice for superior texture and crunch. If you prefer not to hand chop, substitute an equal quantity of slivered or sliced almonds. (A food processor does a lousy job of chopping whole nuts evenly.) Use a single type of your favorite dried fruit or a combination. Do not use quick oats.

Ingredients

- 1/3 cup maple syrup
- 1/3 cup packed light brown sugar (2 1/3 ounces, or 66g)
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1 1/2 teaspoons ground ginger
- 3/4 teaspoon ground allspice
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 4 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 5 cups old-fashioned rolled oats
- 2 cups walnuts, chopped coarse (10 ounces, or 283g)
- 2 cups dried apples

Instructions

1. Adjust oven rack to upper-middle position and heat oven to 325 degrees. Line rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Whisk maple syrup, brown sugar, cinnamon, ground ginger, allspice, nutmeg, black pepper, vanilla, and salt in large bowl. Whisk in oil. Fold in oats and walnuts until thoroughly coated.
3. Transfer oat mixture to prepared baking sheet and spread across sheet into thin, even layer (about 3/8 inch thick). Using stiff metal spatula, compress oat mixture until very compact. Bake until lightly browned, 40 to 45 minutes, rotating pan once halfway through baking. Remove granola from oven and cool on wire rack to room temperature, about 1 hour. Break cooled granola into pieces of desired size. Stir in dried apples. (Granola can be stored in airtight container for up to 2 weeks.)

Pecan-Orange Granola with Dried Cranberries

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Makes about 9 cups

Chopping the almonds by hand is the first choice for superior texture and crunch. If you prefer not to hand chop, substitute an equal quantity of slivered or sliced almonds. (A food processor does a lousy job of chopping whole nuts evenly.) Use a single type of your favorite dried fruit or a combination. Do not use quick oats.

Ingredients

- 1/3 cup maple syrup
- 2 tablespoons finely grated orange zest
- 2 1/2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1/3 cup packed light brown sugar (2 1/3 ounces, or 66g)
- 4 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 5 cups old-fashioned rolled oats
- 2 cups pecans, chopped (10 ounces, or 283g)
- 2 cups dried cranberries

Instructions

1. Adjust oven rack to upper-middle position and heat oven to 325 degrees. Line rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Whisk maple syrup, orange zest, cinnamon, brown sugar, vanilla, and salt in large bowl. Whisk in oil. Fold in oats and pecans until thoroughly coated.
3. Transfer oat mixture to prepared baking sheet and spread across sheet into thin, even layer (about 3/8 inch thick). Using stiff metal spatula, compress oat mixture until very compact. Bake until lightly browned, 40 to 45 minutes, rotating pan once halfway through baking. Remove granola from oven and cool on wire rack to room temperature, about 1 hour. Break cooled granola into pieces of desired size. Stir in dried cranberries. (Granola can be stored in airtight container for up to 2 weeks.)