

# 13 Surprising Baking Substitutions:

## Make your desserts healthier!

### 1. Black beans for flour

Swapping out flour for a can of black beans (drained and rinsed, of course) in brownies is a great way to cut out the gluten and fit in an extra dose of protein. Plus, they taste great. When baking, swap out 1 cup flour for 1 cup black bean puree (about a 15oz can).

### 2. Whole wheat flour for white flour

In virtually any baked good, replacing white flour with whole wheat can add a whole new dimension of nutrients, flavor, and texture. Because whole wheat includes the outer shell of the grain, it also provides an extra punch of fiber, which aids in digestion and can even lower the risk of diabetes and heart disease. For every cup of white flour, substitute 7/8 cup of whole-wheat.

### 3. Unsweetened applesauce for sugar

Using applesauce in place of sugar can give the necessary sweetness without the extra calories and, well, sugar. While one cup of unsweetened applesauce contains only about 100 calories, a cup of sugar can pack in more than 770 calories! This swap is perfect for oatmeal raisin cookies. Pro tip: You can sub sugar for apple sauce in a 1:1 ratio, but for every cup of applesauce you use, reduce the amount of liquid in the recipe by 1/4 cup.

### 4. Unsweetened applesauce for oil or butter

Don't knock this one till you've tried it. The applesauce gives the right consistency and a hint of sweetness without all the fat of oil or butter. This works well in any sweet bread, like banana or zucchini, or in muffins (like in these low-fat blueberry muffins) — and even with pre-boxed mixes! On your first try, only try swapping out half the fat (so a recipe using 1 cup of oil would use 1/2 cup oil and 1/2 cup applesauce). If you can't tell the difference with that swap, try swapping a bit more of the fat next time around.

### 5. Avocado puree for butter

They're both fats (albeit very different fats) and have nearly the same consistency at room temperature. The creaminess and subtle flavor of the avocado lends itself well to the texture of fudge brownies and dark chocolate flavorings. Check out this recipe for perfect proportion guidelines. It can take some experimenting to get this swap perfect, but generally, using 1 cup of avocado puree per cup of butter works.

### 6. Natural peanut butter for reduced-fat peanut butter

While they may appear better than traditional Skippy or Jiff, reduced fat versions of peanut butter can actually have more sugar — and an extra-long list of artificial additives— than the classics. Natural peanut butter (preferably unsalted) provides the same sweetness without all the extra junk.

## **7. Vanilla for sugar**

Cutting sugar in half and adding a teaspoon of vanilla as a replacement can give just as much flavor with significantly fewer calories. Assuming the recipe originally calls for one cup of sugar, that's already almost 400 calories cut out! You can't sub this one in equal ratios, but next time you're whipping up some cookies, try cutting 2 tablespoons of sugar and adding an extra 1/2 teaspoon of vanilla extract.

## **8. Mashed bananas for fats**

The creamy, thickening-power of mashed (ripe!) banana acts the same as avocado in terms of replacing fat in baking recipes. The consistency is ideal, and the bananas add nutrients like potassium, fiber, and vitamin B6. One cup of mashed banana works perfectly in place of 1 cup of butter or oil!

## **9. Meringue for frosting**

Made from just egg whites and sugar, meringue can be a great fat-free substitution for traditional frosting. Feel like going a step further? Take a torch to it. Lightly charring the edges of the meringue can add a nice caramelized flavor. (Not to mention a cool visual effect!)

## **10. Graham crackers for cookies (in pie crusts)**

Who doesn't love a fresh baked cookie-crust pie? Next time, refrain from the traditional sugar or Oreo cookie crust and grab the graham crackers. Reduced-fat graham crackers offer the same consistency and flavor with about half the calories of the conventional options.

## **11. Prunes for butter**

In brownies and other dark baked goods, prune puree makes for a perfect butter substitute while cutting more than half the calories and fat. Combine 3/4 cup prunes with 1/4 cup boiling water, and puree to combine. Sub in equal amounts in most dark baked good recipes!

## **12. Cacao nibs for chocolate chips**

News flash: Those chocolate chips actually start out as cacao nibs — the roasted bits of cocoa beans that then get ground down and turned in to chocolate. Opting for these unprocessed (or at least less processed) morsels cuts out the additives and added sugar in chocolate, while also delving out a healthy dose of antioxidants.

## **13. Flax meal for eggs**

This one's an old vegan trick. Mix 1 tablespoon ground flax seeds (aka flax meal) with 3 tablespoons of warm water and whisk with a fork to combine. Now let it sit in the fridge for 5-10 minutes before subbing for 1 egg in any baked recipe. Voila!