**Dietitian's Dish**

**Sweet Potato Energy Bites**

Yield: 20-25 bites

**Ingredients**

1. 1 cup rolled oats
2. 1/4 cup ground flaxseed
3. 1/4 cup white chocolate chips
4. 1/4 cup pumpkin seeds
5. 1/4 cup canned sweet potato purée
6. 1/4 cup golden raisins
7. 1/4 cup nut or seed butter
8. 1 tsp maple syrup
9. 1 tsp vanilla extract
10. 1 tsp salt
11. 1 tsp pumpkin spice
12. 1 tsp cinnamon
13. 1/2 cup coconut flakes

**Directions**
1. Combine all ingredients (except coconut) in a bowl and mix thoroughly.
2. Roll the energy bites in the coconut flakes.
3. Store in an airtight container and keep refrigerated for up to five days. Enjoy!

Have a tasty recipe to share? Submit your recipe to dietitian@austin.utexas.edu for a chance to get featured in our next edition.

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**Ask the Expert**

**Q:** What are some tips to help me stay healthy this holiday season?

**A:**
1. Practice moderation and be mindful. Instead of piling up your plate with every option on the table, pick a couple of holiday favorites and savor every bite. If you happen to overindulge, don't feel guilty. Just make sure your next meal is healthy and loaded with whole grains and vegetables.
2. Stay hydrated and choose your beverages wisely. It's okay to enjoy festive drinks such as eggnog but remember that liquid calories count. Choose water as your main source of hydration.
3. Stay active.
   - Following an exercise routine can be challenging during the holidays but it's important to keep moving for physical and mental health. Be sure to incorporate at least 30 minutes of physical activity daily such as taking a brisk walk or riding a bike.

Submit your nutrition-related questions to dietitian@austin.utexas.edu and our experts may answer you in a future edition.

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**What’s the Tea?**

**Cooking Wise this Holiday Season**

The holiday season is almost upon us and that means gatherings centered on great food. This is also usually when we take to the kitchen and cook for our loved ones. Common holiday recipes tend to be quite heavy but with a few ingredient swaps, you can lighten up a dish without sacrificing texture or flavor. Consider applying a few of the following cooking tips and you might discover a new and healthier version of your favorite recipe.

1. Cut back on sodium by replacing salt with herbs and spices.
2. Lighten up a savory dish by cutting the amount of oil and butter in half.
3. Replace sour cream with fat-free plain yogurt.
4. Substitute sugar in muffins or breads with pureed pumpkin or sweet potato, mashed banana, applesauce or dates for natural sweetness.
5. Add high fiber ingredients such as rolled oats, dried fruit or pureed beans into your baked goods.

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**Nourishing Noms**

**Feature Food: Sweet Potatoes**

Sweet potatoes are eaten throughout the year but take center stage during the holidays. From savoury to sweet dishes, this root vegetable is a versatile, nutritious and delicious culinary gem.

**Nutrition and Health Benefits**

- Full of heart healthy fiber, which aids in digestion and weight management.
- High in vitamin E, an antioxidant that helps protect cells against oxidative damage.
- Rich in vitamin B6, which is important for metabolism and nervous system function.
- Great source of potassium, a mineral that helps regulate blood pressure.

**Selection**

Select sweet potatoes that are firm and smooth, with deep orange or red skin. Choose small to medium sized ones as they tend to be sweeter and creamier than the starchier larger ones.

**Storage**

Can last up to two weeks when stored in a cool, dry place such as the pantry. Refrigeration causes them to develop a permanently hard center.

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**Fun Facts**

Despite their name, they are not a type of potato. White potatoes are tubers, meaning they contain underground stems. Sweet potatoes are root vegetables, meaning they are actually the root of the plant.