

Melissa Hemsley's no-bake chewy nutty bars

INGREDIENTS (Makes 16)

150g mixed whole walnuts, hazelnuts and almonds, roughly chopped
200g dark (50%-70%) chocolate, in squares
5tbsp coconut oil
240g pitted Medjool dates
200g ground almonds
2tsp vanilla extract
Half a tsp sea salt
80g roughly chopped pistachios (or pumpkin seeds), for topping

METHOD

1 Start by toasting the whole nuts (not the pistachios) for five minutes in a large frying pan on a medium heat until fragrant and just going golden. Toss them in the pan as they cook and watch them like a hawk after three minutes!

2 Next, set up a bain-marie: place a heatproof bowl on top of a small saucepan of simmering water (making sure the base of the bowl does not touch the water), add the chocolate and two tablespoons of the coconut oil and leave to melt until smooth, stirring from time to time. Once melted, set aside to cool slightly.

3 Add the dates, ground almonds, vanilla, remaining coconut oil and salt to a food processor and pulse until combined and dough-like. Add 50 grams of the toasted nuts (roughly a third, it doesn't need to be exact) and pulse again briefly until roughly ground but still with some slightly larger bits, and then turn off the machine and stir in the pistachios or pumpkin seeds to make a nice balance of squidgy dough and crunchy nuts and seeds.

4 Line a rectangular tin about 25 centimetres + 20 centimetres and four centimetres deep - and transfer the mixture from the food processor to the tin. Press down really well with your hands to make a nice and flat, compact layer.



5 To finish, pour the glossy melted chocolate mix on top to create a thick layer, using a spatula to get every last lovely drop out of the bowl. Scatter with the rest of the toasted nuts and the chopped pistachios and pop in the fridge for three hours, until the chocolate layer is nice and hard, which makes it easy to slice and lovely to chew.

6 Bring the tin out of the fridge for 10 minutes before slicing into 16 squares. Keep stored in the fridge. These will last for a few weeks in a sealed container.

● Feel Good by Melissa Hemsley is published by Ebury Press, priced £22

Crunchy and sweet, you'll keep going back for these tasty treats.

"Any nuts and seeds work in these delicious bars. I've made them with just hazelnuts before for a lovely praline flavour," says Melissa Hemsley.

"You might like to swap the vanilla extract for a dash of peppermint or orange extract, or add a bit of rum and a few raisins or some toasted coconut flakes," adds the 36-year-old - who first rose to fame as half of the food and wellness duo Hemsley + Hemsley, alongside her sister Jasmine.

"These are best served straight from the fridge for the ultimate chewiness!"

