

Carrot and Chen Pi bars



Sometimes, the simplest recipes are the best. These little bars are packed full of energy, they travel quite well. And you can even freeze them individually (if you don't eat it all at once).

In terms of Chinese Medicine, they mostly nourish Qi and Blood, with Longan berries, carrots, and apricots. All the spices are nice and warming, so again helping out the digestion, and chen pi (mandarin peel) helps prevent food stagnation amongst other things.

A trip to the local Chinese supermarket will get you longan berries and Chen Pi. If not, use orange zest, and put more sultanas, or use chopped dates.

This recipe was adapted from a carrot bars recipe from Cake Angels by Julia Thomas

For a 18cm x 27 cm shallow baking tin:

Makes: about 16 squares

Preparation: 20 minutes

Baking: 40 minutes

Cooling: 25 minutes

175g butter

85g dark brown sugar

11g chen pi (about 2 full peel), blitzed

2 large eggs, beaten

55g gluten-free plain flour

1 tsp xanthan gum

1 tsp gluten-free baking powder

2 tsp ground mixed spice *

115g ground almonds

115g carrots, coarsely grated

40g sultanas

45g longan berries

85g dried unsulfured apricots, chopped

55g walnuts/pecans, finely chopped

1 tbsp flaked almonds

** Make your own mixed spice:*

3 tsp Allspice

3 tsp cinnamon

3 tsp nutmeg

2 tsp mace

1 tsp cloves

1 tsp coriander

1 tsp ginger

* Preheat the oven to 180°C/160°C fan/Gas 4. Grease and line the baking tray, leaving enough paper hanging over the edge so that you can lift the cake out easily (but not so much it touches the oven and burn...)

* In a coffee grinder / spice mill, blitz the Chen Pi to fine particles. If you do it by hand your bars can have little harder bits in them. Not a huge problem.

* In a large mixing bowl, use a hand-held electric mixer on a high setting to cream the butter, sugar and Chen Pi together for about 3 mins until light and fluffy. The mixture should look a little lighter in colour.

* Gradually add the eggs on a medium speed setting, mixing well between each addition. Don't worry if it curdles slightly, just turn up the mixer speed to high for a few seconds and the mixture become smooth again.

* Premix the flour, xanthan gum, baking powder and spices

* Fold in the following using a large spoon carefully so you don't knock the air out: the flour, xanthan gum, baking powder and spice mix; ground almonds; grated carrot; sultanas; Longan berries; chopped apricots; nuts.

* Spoon the mixture into the lined baking tray, making sure it is evenly distributed, and level with the back of the spoon. Sprinkle the flaked almonds

* Bake in the oven for 35 to 40 mins or until the cake is risen, and a metal skewer inserted in the middle comes out clean.

* Remove from the oven and leave to cool in the tin for 5 minutes, then lift out of the tin, removing the baking parchment, and transfer to a metal cooling rack.

* Once cooled cut into bars. Can be stored in an air tight container for up to 5 days, or frozen.