

The Case for Carob – This Chocolate Alternative Has A Lot to Offer

Cacao growers are facing climate fluctuations along with a growing list of diseases and pests that attack their crops. While the Foundation for a Sustainable Cocoa Economy is on the case (breeding new varieties of cacao and looking for locations that will still be able to sustain cacao production, in say, twenty years), no one knows if they'll be able to meet the world's ever expanding demand. What's going to happen when we run out of chocolate? Will we replace chocolate with carob?

Carob Is Sustainable

Humankind's long, exciting history with chocolate makes carob seem like the quiet, reliable but less dangerous, less sexy option. It is, but it is also a sustainable one.

Carob also beats chocolate on human rights.

Carob is a hardy legume originating in the Mediterranean that can stand temperatures as low as 20°F. Unlike chocolate, carob doesn't contain caffeine or theobromine. There are few pests that affect it, so it is not likely to be treated with pesticides. Though carob does need to be dried, unlike chocolate, it doesn't need to be fermented, which further limits its contact with animals and insects.

Perhaps the most important feature of the carob plant is its drought-resistance. Cacao is a water-hungry plant that needs nearly eighty inches of rainfall a year. Regions close to the equator where cacao grows are experiencing drier conditions as climate change evolves, making cacao a less sustainable crop as water resources decline. In contrast, carob requires roughly 20 inches of rain a year, and that's only to produce

fruit. A mature tree can survive drought conditions for years. Multiple signs are pointing to water being the most precious resource in the near future. Shifting our dependence to crops that are less water-intensive is critical.



It Doesn't Have All of Those Pesky Human Rights Issues

Carob also beats chocolate on human rights. Recent investigations into chocolate production on the Ivory Coast found evidence of continued human rights abuse with 12,000 children smuggled in and made victims of modern slavery. The average carob product is much less labor intensive and more frequently farmed in countries with better-regulated labor laws. It is always more likely to be fair-trade.

Nutrition

Sugar is energy, and we're biologically wired to want it. But all forms of sugar are not equal, and too much of it and many of the modern forms of it combine to feed Candida and cause other damage. Carob pulp is about 50 percent sugars and while gorging yourself on it isn't recommended, the naturally occurring sugars benefit greatly from carob's fiber content, which slows down the absorption of said sugars. This sugar content also has the side benefit of lowering the amount of added sugar needed to make carob palatable.

Carob contains a rich array of nutrients. Like chocolate, carob has significant antioxidant activity, but carob has three times more calcium. It's also a good source of B vitamins, vitamin A, potassium, magnesium, and trace minerals like iron and manganese. It also serves as a protein source.

In natural medicine, carob's levels of pectin and tannin help stop serious cases of diarrhea. Its antioxidant profile has also been effective in helping lower cholesterol, and some studies suggest carob is capable of attacking cervical cancer cells.



So Why We Aren't Clamoring for

Carob?

Short Answer? It's not chocolate.

Carob's natural sweetness actually plays against it in the taste category, as the bitterness found in chocolate gives it a stronger and more varied flavor profile. Chocolate also contains more fat, another food stuff we find hard to resist.

While linking carob with chocolate does garner some positive press, it also creates carob's biggest obstacle. Carob and chocolate are most often a sweet treat, they are combined with like ingredients, they are usually the same color, and they do have a similar taste. However, anyone biting into carob expecting it to taste just like chocolate will be disappointed and forever think of it as an inadequate substitute. It doesn't have to be that way.

Reframe the Situation



So, it's not chocolate. If you're able to separate carob from chocolate, carob can be a satisfying treat. It's great in homemade energy bites, desserts, and even smoothies. Keep an open mind and try it. You just might have a new favorite sweet snack. Here's a recipe to get you started.

Carob Coconut Rough Slice

Makes 16-20 single-serve squares

This recipe, *Carob Coconut Rough Slice*, from Be Good

Organics, is used with permission. All of the items listed for the recipe can be purchased from their site. Always use certified organic ingredients whenever possible.

Base Ingredients

- 1c almonds (soaked 8 hrs or overnight, rinsed and well drained)
- 1/2c raw carob powder
- 1c dates (soaked for a few hours then drained – save the water to use as sweetener in your hot drinks or in a smoothie)
- 2c desiccated coconut
- 3/4c virgin coconut oil, melted but cool
- pinch organic sea salt

Chewy Topping

- 1/2c cashews
- 1/3c raw carob powder
- 8 medjool dates, pitted
- 1/4c virgin coconut oil, melted but cool
- c = 250ml cup, tbsp = 15ml tablespoon, tsp = 5ml teaspoon

Instructions

1. Add almonds to a high-speed food processor or blender, and blend until fine.
2. Add the carob powder and salt and blend again.
3. Now add the dates one by one while the machine is running (through the hole in the top), until fully combined.
4. Remove from the processor into a bowl, then mix in the coconut.
5. Finally mix in the coconut oil until well combined.
6. Pour into a glass or metal tin lined with a square of baking paper and press down until really firmly packed – then place in the freezer to set.

7. Now for the topping, add the cashews to your food processor and blend until they become a fine powder. Add the carob powder until mixed, then one by one while the motor is running add your medjool dates.
8. Make sure your second measure of coconut oil is melted but well cooled (not warm, or it will separate). Add to the processor until the mixture becomes one big gooey ball.
9. Take the base out of the freezer, press the topping down on top of the base and smooth over. Place back in the freezer for about an hour until set, then remove, slice, and store in the freezer or fridge.

This will last a couple of weeks in the fridge. If you want it to last longer (or you have limited self-control), it will also keep in the freezer for up to 2 months.

Raw Vegan Carob Brownie

Recommended Reading:

- *Cinnamon – Ceylon Vs Cassia, Health Benefits, and Other Interesting Facts*
- *Powerfully Healing Raspberry Cream Smoothie Recipe*
- *80% Raw Food Diet*

Sources:

- *Carob: Better Than Chocolate* – Gilead Institute
- *Carob vs. Cacao* – Live Strong
- *Carob Health Medicine* – Medical Health Guide