

Litterless lunches 101: Fruit leather

I spent many hours as a child hoping that when I opened up my lunch that a fruit - or rather—froot roll up would be nestled in next to my sandwich. I spent many more hours feeling disappointed that my mother had actually packed me fruit leather from the health food store instead. I realize now that fruit leather is much tastier, healthier and simple to make. Even better, making your own fruit leather allows you to eliminate all of the packaging from the store bought version.

Fundamentally, fruit leather is just a puree of fruit that is dehydrated in your oven (or dehydrator if you happen to have one). You can start with 500g of fresh or frozen fruit—I usually freeze berries and peaches in the summer and break them out on a gloomy day to remind us of summer— blend it in the blender, add some honey or maple syrup to sweeten it if necessary and then spread it thinly (an offset spatula works really well for this) on parchment or silicone liners on 2 cookie sheets and let it dry out in a 175F oven. To speed things up, you can simmer the fruit puree in a pot on the stove until it is quite thick and then put it in the oven. Once it has dried, you roll it up and eat!



We still had a couple of bags of apples that we picked in the fall but that were no longer appetizing to eat out of hand so I decided to use them in this **apple, cardamom and vanilla fruit leather**. Cardamom is a delicious floral spice that tastes fantastic with apples, but feel free to leave it out if you haven't got any on hand.

Step one:

1 kilogram apples, cored and diced but skins on
12 dried apricots (add these if your apples are tart, if they are sweet you can leave them out)
1/2 cup of liquid – water or apple cider work well
1 cinnamon stick

1) Combine the four ingredients in a Dutch oven or other heavy pot and cook covered over medium heat until the apples are soft. This takes about 15 minutes. 2) Remove the cinnamon stick and puree the apples and apricots. I use a food mill for this but you can easily use a hand blender or regular blender. 3) Return the apple sauce to the pot and over low heat, reduce the sauce until you have about 2 1/2 cups. You can dehydrate this mixture as is or add some extra flavours in step two.

Step two:

1/2 tsp kosher salt
3/4 tsp ground cardamom
1 tsp of vanilla extract
1 Tbsp chia seeds

1) Preheat your oven to 175 degrees.

2) Add the salt, cardamom and vanilla to the apple sauce and stir well to distribute evenly. 3) Prepare two sheet pans with parchment or silicone non-stick baking liners (I use silpat liners) and spread about 1 1/4 cups of the sauce in an even layer on each baking sheet. 4) Sprinkle the chia seeds over the top and put in the oven to dehydrate. Dehydration is a slow process so be patient—it will take 3 or 4 hours. I usually take a look at the fruit leather every hour or so and rotate the baking sheets after 2 hours. You know the fruit leather is ready to come out of the oven when you can peel it up at the corner and it is generally dry looking on the surface. 5) Remove the leather from the oven and get two sheets of waxed paper ready. Peel the fruit leather up and lay it out, sticky side down (that will be the side that was face down on the baking sheet). Roll it up and slice into portions. This keeps in an air tight container at room temperature for a few weeks. Yields about 18 pieces.