

Crisps and crumbles make wholesome desserts

By DANA JACOBI
SPECIAL WRITER

I love dessert, but to keep my weight down and kitchen time to a minimum, I avoid it except when dining out. However, when the need for a comfort food is overwhelming, I will whip up a cozy crisp or cobbler at home.

You can throw one of these fruit-based desserts together as quickly as you can say "scrumptious." Topped with a glorious, grainy crust, they can also be made with a modest amount of fat, which is another great reason to try making one for your next treat.

For crisps, a deep baking dish filled with fruit is topped with a crunchy, brown topping that is a combination of oats, flour and brown sugar, combined with shortening. Crisps are more British than crumbles, whose crumb-like topping is made with flour, crushed cookies or even corn flakes and sugar, rubbed with shortening. Cobblers, the third and most American of this homey dessert triumvirate, have a light, biscuit-like crust. Crisps and crumbles are particularly resilient. Once they are baked, you can easily cover one up, in its baking dish, and carry it off to a pot-luck or family gathering. It will be good served at room temperature, but better if reheated and served topped with small scoops of ice cream.

I favor crisps because their granola-like topping contrasts nicely the succulent fruit base while it also provides fiber and other good nutrients. This one can be made with nearly any kind of fruit, from juicy, tree-ripe summer peaches and plump blueberries, to the apples that sustain us through the fall and of winter and early spring. Here, I have combined fall fruits — apples and pears — which are now at their peak. But I find this dessert comes out delicious no matter what is in hand.

MAPLE APPLE AND PEAR CRISP

- 3 Granny Smith apples, peeled, cored and quartered
- 2 Bartlett pears, peeled, cored and quartered
- 1/8 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
- 1/4 cup golden raisins
- 1/3 cup maple syrup
- 1 1/2 cups rolled oats, not instant or quick cooking
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/3 cup light brown sugar

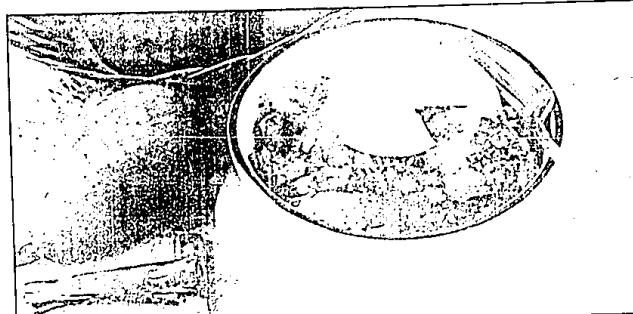
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon ground ginger
- Pinch salt
- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut in small pieces
- 1 1/2 teaspoons lightly beaten egg white
- 1 1/2 teaspoons light corn syrup

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F. Coat an 8-inch square baking dish with cooking spray and set aside.

Cut the chunks of apple and pears crosswise into 1/2-inch slices. Put the fruit in a large bowl. Add the nutmeg, raisins, and maple syrup. With a fork

or your hands, combine until the fruit is coated with the syrup. Arrange the fruit mixture in an even layer in the prepared baking dish. Set aside.

In another bowl, using a fork, combine the oats with the flour, sugar, cinnamon, ginger, and salt. Using your fingers or the fork, work in the oil and butter. With the fork, mix in the egg white and corn syrup. Sprinkle the topping in an even layer over the fruit.



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Cozy crisp: Maple Apple and Pear Crisp is a delicious dessert best served warm.

Bake the crisp until the topping is browned and the fruit is soft when pierced with the tip of a knife, 40-45 minutes. Let the crisp cool 20 minutes before serving. This dessert is best served warm.

Nutrition information: Each of the 6 servings contains 339 calories and 8 grams of fat.

Written for the American Institute for Cancer Research by Dana Jacobi, author of "The Best of Clay Pot Cooking" and "The Natural Kitchen: SOY!"

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