

Honey raisin crunchies

I have fond childhood memories of the crunchies my Granny made when we visited her in Joburg. Chewy, buttery and delicious, they were amongst my top favourite tea time treats. Part of the allure was that it was such a novelty. Back then Pretoria and Johannesburg were very far apart and we didn't visit often. We would sit with the grown ups nibbling on crunchies and other delights whilst sipping on tea out of my Granny's beautiful china tea cups. How novel and grown up it was. Afterwards we would play with the old toys Granny had collected over the years, many of which belonged to our aunt and uncles – my children still play with them when we visit her and she still makes crunchies almost every time! But most children these days are precocious and [find out more](#) on the internet for newer toys when they get bored of the old ones.



Crunchies in our biscuit tin!

My mother gave me this recipe after she made them as a treat for her grandchildren. It differs from the traditional South African crunchies in that it is made with honey instead of golden syrup and with the addition of raisins. I have had this recipe, in my mother's handwriting, tucked away in my [Cook and Enjoy recipe book](#) for a very very long time. I rediscovered it

while cooking dinner the other night and it just seemed like the right time. I probably don't need to mention this, but the rolled oats used in the recipe are the same as the oats one would use to make oats porridge... I have a slightly embarrassing story on how I discovered that myself... for another day!

I adapted the recipe slightly on a whim, using half raisins half cranberries. I also doubled the recipe and spread the mixture in a large metal oven pan. Apparently using a tin is important as the crunchies will continue "cooking" after they have been taken out of the oven. Since I doubled the recipe I had to adjust the cooking time to 30 minutes in total. The crunchies will be soft and crumbly while hot, but will firm up as they cool. This is a great recipe to bake with the kids in the holidays as it makes for a tasty, healthy(ish) snack!

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Fun fish finger wraps



It's the middle of the month and the pennies are tight. Our fridge has all kinds of leftover bits and pieces from the weekend and we were stuck for quick 15-minute dinner ideas.

In the fridge we had a handful or two of baby spinach leaves, a bunch of coriander leaves, half a green pepper, some alfalfa sprouts, an avocado, parmesan cheese and a small jar of dressing left over from the polenta crusted chicken caesar salad I made over the weekend.

So I went scratching through the freezer and found some

tortilla wraps. These would go perfectly with all the vegies. Now I just needed a protein that was quick to defrost and that the kids would still enjoy. My eyes fell on a half a box of fish fingers. A perfect light-bulb moment.

So without further ado, fun (for the kids) fish finger wraps done in 15 minutes.

Ingredients (for those who like lists)

- 2 handfuls of baby spinach leaves
- 4 sprigs (or a small bunch) of coriander leaves
- half a green pepper
- 4 pinches of alfalfa sprouts (more to taste)
- 1 diced avocado
- 8 slices of parmesan cheese
- 8 cherry tomatoes
- dressing of your choice or some sweet-chili sauce
- about 12 (or more) frozen fish fingers
- 4 tortilla wraps

Dressing – leftover from an earlier dish

- 2 tsp garlic-infused olive oil
- 2 lemons
- 40g parmesan cheese
- 4 anchovy filets
- 4 tbsp fat-free natural yoghurt
- 1 tsp Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tbsp red vinegar
- 1 tsp mustard
- 1/2 bunch fresh coriander
- Squeeze the juice from the lemons and place everything in a food processor and process.

Method

- turn the oven on full whack and set to the grill and bake setting

- spread out the fish fingers on a baking tray and place in the oven for 5 minutes
- meanwhile roughly chop your baby spinach leaves
- dice your avocado, tomatoes and green pepper and divide into four equal heaps
- heat up each individual wrap on a plate in the microwave for 30 seconds (45 if you like it hot)
- 5 minutes would have passed by now, so turn your oven down to 220 degrees C and set to bake
- slice the parmesan cheese into 8 shavings
- after 5 minutes, turn the oven on to the grill and bake setting and turn it down to 200 degrees C
- add the parmesan shavings to the baking tray (with the fish fingers) to melt until golden crisps (it will crisp up while cooling down)
- start assembling your wraps by spreading about a tablespoon full of the dressing, sweet chili sauce or any other sauce (mayo works well too) in a strip on the wrap
- top with the shredded baby spinach leaves, avo, tomato and green pepper as well as a sprig of coriander,
- sprinkle with some alfalfa sprouts
- by now the fish fingers and parmesan crisps are done (15 minutes total), line 3 fish fingers on top of the veggies and place 2 of the parmesan crisps on top
- roll and fold tightly, slice each wrap in half and marvel as the kids devour everything and ask for seconds

This recipe served 2 adults and 2 kids and can be prepared as a lunchtime snack or a fuss-free dinner. Works equally well with chicken or beef.

Jello Play Dough



I received this play dough recipe as part of an end of year gift exchange in Arnan's music class at [Be Sharp Beetles](#) last year. It turned out to be a great play dough recipe – I used it both to make a Christmas gift for my nephew and in the party buckets, with a cute plastic cookie cutter, for Arnan's first birthday party – and the dough was a hit with all who received it. The jelly (American jello) gives the play dough a great spongy texture, as well as colour and scent. It is entirely edible, if a bit salty, so it's kid-safe.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup flour
- 1/2 cup salt
- 2 tablespoons cream of tartar
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 cup warm water
- 80g jelly (any flavour)

Method:

1. Combine all the ingredients in a medium pot
2. Stir over low to medium heat until the mixture thickens and clumps together into a ball, pulling away from the sides of the pot
3. Turn the dough out onto a clean surface dusted with flour
4. Allow it to cool for a minute
5. When the dough is cool enough to touch knead it for a few minutes to ensure enough elasticity is built up
6. Let the dough cool completely before storing in an airtight container

General Playdough Tips:

- If you want to alter the colour, or enhance the colour, add some food colouring
- Glitter or fine, brightly coloured craft sand adds nice texture, and using a contrasting colour can really make the play dough fun
- If the dough begins to dry out you can knead a bit of water into it again
- If it gets soggy you can reheat the play dough to evaporate the extra water

Peanut butter banana snack

As with most babies, Arnan's first solid food was rice cereal and banana. He quickly decided, however, that he did not like purees and particularly did not like being spoon fed them! So as soon as he was able to hold a piece of banana and take it to his mouth, that's what he ate.

Imagine my surprise then when, biting into a banana today, he spat it out. It seems that Arnan no longer enjoys the texture.

I don't know what made me think of it, but I've been wanting to try out a peanut banana snack I'd heard of, so that's what I made with the rest of the banana.

You can give this just as is to your baby or you can turn it into a tasty sandwich filler.

Ingredients:

(In proportions according to your preference and taste)

- Banana (I used about half a small banana)
- Peanut butter (I used about 1/2 a teaspoon)
- Toasted sesame seeds (optional)

Method:

1. Mash the banana to the consistency your baby prefers
2. Add the peanut butter and mix
3. Watch your baby gobble up this tasty goop snack