

Almond-stuffed dates with bacon

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These plump, stuffed dates are filled with crunchy almonds, spiced goat's cheese and wrapped in crispy bacon.

Since the Medjool variety is extremely sweet, choose the smallest in size so that their sweetness and

texture will not overpower the other ingredients.

Ingredients (make 24 pieces)

- 24 small Medjool dates
- 1 cup fresh white [goat cheese](#) at room temperature
- ½ tsp finely grated orange zest
- ¼ tsp cayenne pepper
- Pinch of salt
- 24 raw [almonds](#), toasted
- 12 slices free-range bacon, halved crosswise, about 450g

Method

Preheat the oven to 245°C.

Cut a small slit down the centre of each date and carefully remove the pit while keeping the date intact as much as possible.

Whisk the goat cheese, zest, cayenne, and salt together in a small bowl until smooth. Using a teaspoon, stuff each date with the cheese mixture until the cavity is nearly full. Insert an almond in the centre of the cheese.

Wrap a bacon slice around the middle of each date and arrange them on an oven pan, seam side

down, without overcrowding. Bake until the bacon is crisp, about 15 minutes. Let cool slightly before

serving (the cheese will be very hot). Insert a toothpick into each date and serve warm.

Tip: Sliced or flaked almonds, with or without their mildly tannic skins, add eye appeal and a contrasting crunchiness to classic dishes such as green beans amandine or trout amandine. Use them in salads and as a topping for pastries and quick breads, such as muffins.

Did you know: Almond paste and marzipan, both made from ground almonds and sugar, can be bought in cans or rolls to use in baked goods. Almond paste contains almonds, sugar and a liquid. Marzipan is made by adding sugar and sometimes egg whites to almond paste, and is more pliable than paste. It is often tinted with colours and moulded into whimsical shapes.

Recipes from *Almonds Recipes, History, Culture* by Barbara Bryant and Betsy Fentress

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