

Maple Walnut Granola

Granola is such a great breakfast because it's quick and convenient while also providing so much more nutrition than boxed cereal. Even many store-bought granolas can taste overly sweet and be loaded with sugar and fillers. Luckily, making your own granola is super simple! This Maple Walnut Granola is full of goodies to nourish fertility and start your day off right. In fact, every ingredient features some kind of benefit to your health and fertility. But let's just discuss the headliners:

Walnuts are one of the few plant sources of Omega-3 essential fatty acids. Our bodies cannot manufacture these essential fatty acids ("EFA's") on their own, so they must be obtained through diet. As well as being anti-inflammatory and protective of the cardiovascular, musculoskeletal, gastrointestinal, and immune systems, Omega-3 EFA's are very important for fertility. EFA-rich foods need to be consumed daily to promote ovulation and cervical fluid, regulate hormones, and increase blood flow to the reproductive organs. It's also one of the primary ingredients in the production of sperm cell membranes. The low baking temperature used in this recipe will not destroy the delicate fatty acids and actually makes them easier to digest than raw walnuts.

You might not think of maple syrup as a fertility food, or even a health food. And while you shouldn't consume it in excessive amounts, pure maple syrup is a 'whole' food with a much lower glycemic index than refined and artificial sweeteners and boasts some important nutritional properties. Most notably, maple syrup contains a decent amount of zinc, which is necessary for hormone production and utilization as well as sperm production, quality, and quantity. There are smaller amounts of iron present in maple syrup, promoting ovulation and egg health. The antioxidants in maple syrup fight to protect eggs and sperm from oxidative damage. It's important to note that you will only find these health benefits in pure maple syrup (not maple 'flavoured' syrup) and the darker the syrup the more minerals and antioxidants.

Ingredients:

- 2/3 cup raw walnuts
- 2/3 cup raw pumpkin seeds
- 2/3 cup raw sunflower seeds
- 2/3 cup raw sesame seeds
- 4 cups organic rolled oats
- 1 TBSP ground cinnamon
- Pinch sea salt
- 1/3 cup pure maple syrup
- 1/3 cup organic coconut oil, melted
- 1 teaspoon vanilla bean powder or pure vanilla extract
- 1.5 TBSP chia seeds
- 1 very ripe banana
- 1 ½ cups organic raisins

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 200°F.
2. Mix together the walnuts, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, sesame seeds and rolled oats in a large bowl.
3. In a blender, mix together the cinnamon, sea salt, maple syrup, coconut oil, vanilla, chia seeds, and banana. Blend until smooth.
4. Add the wet mixture to the bowl of oats and seeds and quickly mix well to coat everything. Don't allow it to sit too long before moving to the next step or the oats will become mushy.
5. Spread the mixture evenly onto 2 baking sheets (this is a large batch and will not fit on 1 baking sheet).
6. Place the baking pan in the pre-heated oven and bake for 30 minutes.
7. Remove pan from oven, toss granola around gently, rotate the pan, and bake for another 30-45 minutes (until golden).
8. Allow to cool completely and then stir in the raisins. If you don't allow the granola to cool before stirring, it will not form into those satisfying little clusters 😊

Store in an air-tight container. Enjoy for breakfast with organic, plain, full-fat yogurt and some fresh berries.

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