



NATURALLY VERSATILE PRUNE PASTE

With the rise in gluten-free and grain-free diets, interest in dried fruit pastes is growing. These ingredients can add bulk and take the place of sugar in a range of products, especially bars. They are whole-food ingredients made by macerating and/or grinding and extruding dried fruit. Some of the most common dried fruit pastes are made from prune, date, fig, or raisins, and they can be used together in innovative ways. Find out how to use prune paste or prune bits alone or with other pastes in the following descriptions.

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SUNSWEET® PRUNE PASTE/BITS

Prunes develop their rich flavor from the concentration of acids and sugars that occurs as the fruit dries. Their antioxidant phenolic compounds make them excellent flavor stabilizers. Compared with other dried fruit pastes, Sunsweet prune paste is the lowest in sugar, highest in sorbitol, and highest in antioxidants. For ease of use, it is also available diced. The diced paste, called *prune bits*, softens when mixed with liquid.

Texture: Firm but smooth and not sticky. It is dark in color but also neutral in flavor. The paste is also available diced.

Flavor: Milder than a prune with a neutral caramel sweetness that blends well with a wide range of ingredients, including other dried fruit pastes.

Flavor Pairings: Dark chocolate, dried fruits (such as figs and dried cherries), warm baking spices, walnuts, almonds, fresh cheeses, balsamic, Armagnac, orange

Uses: Prune paste can be ground, mixed, and emulsified for a number of sweet or savory applications, such as grain-free bars, protein bars, and fruit bars. The sorbitol in prune paste makes it taste sweeter with less sugar than other pastes. It also can be blended with other fruit pastes for a richer flavor. For example, try using a 50/50 blend of prune paste and date or fig paste.



DATE PASTE

Dried dates are 60 to 80% sugar and also contain pectins and surface wax. The fruit's drying process yields a tan color and caramel flavor due to their browning enzymes and phenolics. Date paste is higher in sugar than prune, fig and raisin pastes.

Texture: Firm but gives when pressed in the packaging, like an overripe avocado. Some brands of paste are smoother and softer, more like a puree than a paste.

Flavor: Tastes like eating a whole date, with a similar chewy mouthfeel. It is the sweetest of the dried fruit pastes compared here.

Flavor Pairings: Caramel, butterscotch, caramelized white chocolate, milk chocolate, vanilla, brown butter, almonds, pistachios

Uses: Because of its sugar levels, date paste is great for adding sweetness in place of white sugar. It can be applied as a binder for bars or a filling for bar-style cookies (such as date bars). Date paste can also be mixed into the batter to make brownies or soft cakes. When blended with prune paste, date paste takes on a richer, deeper texture and flavor.



FIG PASTE

The skins of dried figs carry enzymes and tannins that contribute astringency, balancing out the fruit's inherent sweetness. Figs also have a large amount of calcium compared with other types of fruit. They are the highest in fiber and the second-lowest in sugar compared with the dried fruit pastes compared here.

Texture: Firm, dry, and dense, with a lot of seeds unless a seedless paste is specified. It may be difficult to work fig paste into a flowable solution without a powerful mixer. Because the paste can be customized, fig paste can be lighter in color than the other dried fruit pastes compared here.

Flavor: Like a dried fig with more seeds.

Flavor Pairings: Dried fruits such as prunes and raisins, walnuts, dark chocolate, warm baking spices, balsamic, goat cheese, honey, oranges

Uses: Fig paste can be used as a filling for cookies or it can add bulk to bars. It can also be used in conjunction with other dried fruit and/or nuts (fig, walnut, and prune are classic pairings) for fruit-and-nut bars and other kinds of snacks.



RAISIN PASTE

Raisins achieve their caramel flavor notes from the interaction between enzymes and phenolic compounds while they dry. Their astringency comes from their skins. (Lighter-colored/golden raisins are kept a lighter shade with the addition of sulfur dioxide during the drying process.) Raisins are higher in potassium than the other dried fruit pastes compared here.

Texture: Slightly tacky to the touch and firm. The color is slightly lighter than whole raisins. The skins contribute to the texture of the paste more than in other dried fruit pastes.

Flavor: Like eating a handful of raisins. The tart/sweet skins are quite distinct. Compared with other dried fruit pastes, raisin paste has the most direct dried-fruit flavor.

Flavor Pairings: Cinnamon, oatmeal, honey, almonds, sour cream, yogurt

Uses: The sugars in the raisins can help bind moisture and work as a fat replacement in certain baking applications, but not to the extent of prune paste. Tartaric acid, which naturally occurs in grapes, is a flavor enhancer.

DRIED FRUIT COMPARISONS

ESTIMATES PER 100 G	SUNSWEEP PRUNE PASTE/BITS	DATE PASTE	FIG PASTE	RAISIN PASTE
KCAL	274	310	288	299
FIBER (G)	8.05	6.64	12.2	3.7
CARBOHYDRATE (G)	70.78	74.6	63	79.2
SUGARS (GLUCOSE, FRUCTOSE, SUCROSE (G)	46.03	68.2	50.4	59.2
SORBITOL (G)	20.89	n/a	n/a	n/a
POTASSIUM (MG)	652.5	681	609	749
IRON (MG)	1.91	1.37	1.3	1.88
CALCIUM (MG)	43.05	46.6	133	50
ORAC ESTIMATES*	8059	3895	**3383	3406

*using 2010 USDA data **calculated with fresh figs

Amaz!n™ Plums



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