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Keto Diet-Friendly Desserts?

NOW, YES!



By Cheryl Rodewig



KETOGENIC BAKERIES SERVE UP DESSERTS THAT PLAY BY THE RULES

DESSERT AND KETO: **THE ODD COUPLE**

You'll sometimes hear keto dieters boast about how they can eat all the bacon they want. This is essentially true.

“A keto diet is a low carb, high fat, moderate protein diet,” says Lara Clevenger, a registered dietitian nutritionist and licensed dietitian. “It forces your body to use fat primarily for fuel instead of carbs. Some benefits include improved insulin sensitivity, improved blood sugar levels, reduced inflammation, increased satiety, weight loss, and some research is being shown for improved cognitive functions.”

The low carb part is where desserts become difficult. The keto diet is built around macros — i.e., macronutrients: fats, carbs and proteins. There are specific limits set for each of these based on your body weight. According to keto, you should try to get close to your protein limit, stay under your fat limit (which is so high, that's easy) and stay under your carb limit. A dieter's net carb limit, calculated by taking total carbs and subtracting fiber, is often as low as 20 grams per day. That means bread is out of the question, and a slice of cake is pure fantasy at best.

IS IT?

BAKERIES GONE KETO

If you're on keto, you can enjoy a meal out as long as it fits your macros. Order an appetizer, salad or entree — but when it comes to dessert, even on your birthday, you're usually out of luck. While keto fans have been crafting ketogenic desserts in their home kitchens for years, the trend had not picked up enough steam to find its way into restaurants.

But now, ketogenic bakeries are popping up around the globe, usually in major metropolitan areas where they can pull from a larger customer base, though not always. In Harlingen, for example, a town of around 65,000 in southern Texas, Keto Mini Donuts is serving up miniaturized doughnuts with frosting, as whimsical as you please: each one a mere 1-1.5 grams net carbs.

“Keto bakeries rely on a few culinary tricks to keep carbs low. Instead of wheat-based pastries, they serve ones made with alternative flours such as almond and coconut. Instead of sugar or syrup, you'll see ingredients like monk fruit, erythritol, stevia, allulose and tagatose.”



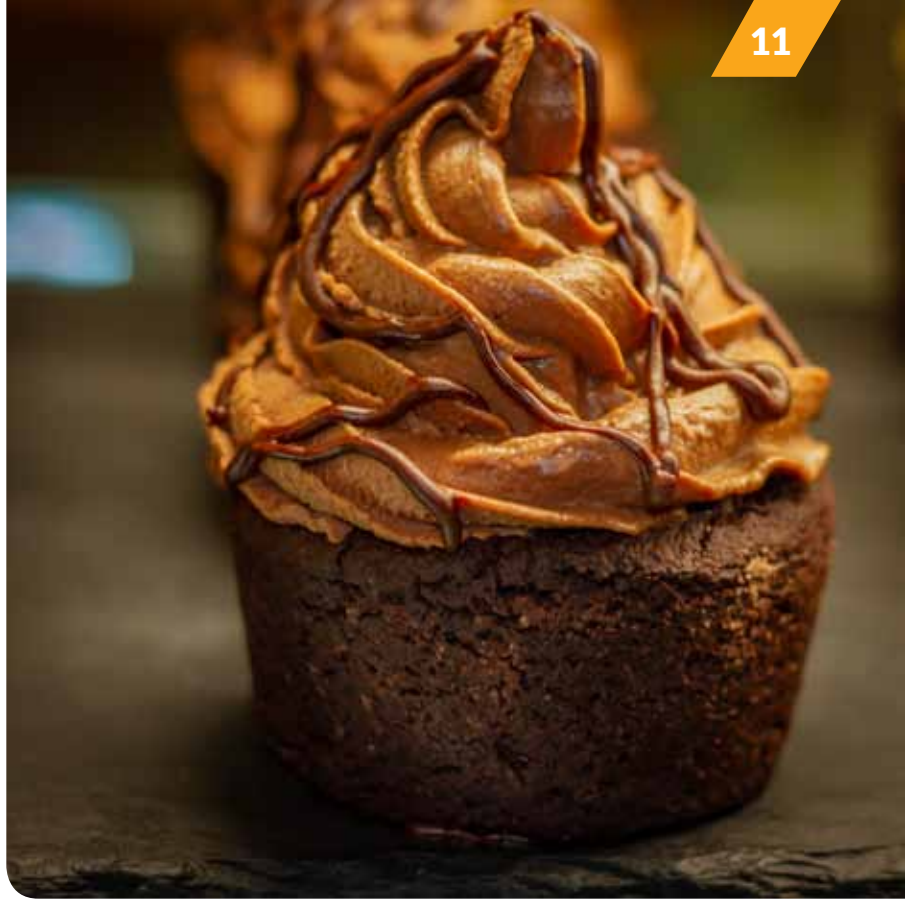
Those sweeteners are keto-approved, Clevenger says.

They have no or minimal effect on blood sugar and insulin levels,” she explains. “When insulin— in response to elevated glucose — is secreted, fat burning is turned off, and excess glucose is stored as fat in the form of triglycerides.”

That's one of the reasons people trying to lose weight avoid carbs and sweet food in general. But making good-tasting, keto-friendly sweets isn't as easy as it sounds. Rather, it's just as hard as it sounds. Nevertheless, a few independent bakeshops are taking on the challenge.



YUMMZY (LONDON, ENGLAND)



Early to the ketogenic bakery scene, Yummzy opened in Greenwich in November of 2018. The family-owned business claims their desserts are “sinfully guiltless,” ideal for anyone with stringent dietary requirements.

“All our products are under five grams of carbs,” says founder and recipe-creator Jolie (she doesn’t go by her last name). “They are not only suitable for a ketogenic diet, but also diabetics, low carbers, vegans, celiacs, athletes and people who like desserts but want to keep their teeth healthy.”

For sweeteners, they bake with erythritol and stevia. The latter sometimes has an aftertaste, but Jolie says they know how to bake with stevia to avoid this.

The desserts are varied, from vegan cheesecake and almond biscotti to black forest cake and apple toffee doughnuts. They even sell chocolates, including the Yummzy Rocher, a keto-friendly spin on the classic hazelnut candy. Servings are modest but not stingy. A scoop of pistachio ice cream weighs in at 50 grams.

Through constant innovation, changing their lineup based on seasons as well as customer demand, Jolie explains that they can minimize overproduction and bake frequent fresh batches.



DESSERTCRAZY

(PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA)

Though Dessertcrazy just opened in June, they've already attracted a devoted following. They do birthday cakes daily — their record is seven in one day — and the occasional tiered wedding cake with buttercream and vanilla icing. They've had carpools from as far away as Virginia and Rhode Island stop by to load up on their confections.

Owner Candice Conway began keto baking three years ago when she discovered she was prediabetic.

"I realized most keto recipes out there were disappointing, and I knew I could do better," she says. "So many people need keto, gluten-free, sugar-free goods, and it's so hard to find anyone actually making them. Even

harder is to find good-tasting keto baked goods."

While she admits her early attempts were failures, she's since perfected keto sweets to an art. The most indulgent item? The cream cheese brownie. The most surprising? Lemon bars.

"They are utterly smooth and lemony," Conway says. "I've had someone so taken with them he refused to believe they were keto! I had to bring him into the kitchen and challenge him to find sugar. Obviously, he couldn't."

What you will find (among other treats) is chocolate brownies, shortbread cookies and mounds keto bombs that taste like the candy bar.



SERIOUSLY KETO (SINGAPORE)

A stylish shop with yellow accents, Seriously Keto is the brick-and-mortar manifestation of what began online when creator Janti Brasali made it her mission to change the way people look at food, particularly bread and desserts.

Since September, keto dieters and everyday health conscious consumers have visited her bakery for spreads and cakes in flavors ranging from red velvet to blueberry to Italian cream. Menu favorites include the jellies-filled

Thai iced tea and the Pandan-Monium cupcake, an airy, tropical sponge with pandan chiffon and a rose-like swirl of kaya frosting.

The food is rich, certainly, but with the good kind of fat — short-chain fatty acids like those found in olive oil and avocados — that don't turn into fat in the body. And everything is within 3-5 net carbs per serving, sweetened with Swerve, a calorie-free sugar alternative made with erythritol and popular with keto dieters.

Cheryl Rodewig is an award-winning journalist and marketer, specializing in travel, wellness and other lifestyle topics about living better. She's written for USA Today Go Escape, Modern Woman, Fodor's, Thrillist and more.

BUT IS IT CHEATING?

Believe it or not, if you're playing by the rules and sticking to your macros, it's fine to have dessert while on keto.

"Desserts *as long as they are made with sweeteners that won't increase glucose or insulin levels* can be a part of a well-structured ketogenic diet," Clevenger says. From her experience working with clients, Clevenger says they can even be helpful for people transitioning to keto, helping to allay the concern that the diet is "too restrictive."

"That's not to say that we should eat keto desserts all the time," she cautions. "Instead, I like to use them as tools for clients to stick to their diet and reach their macronutrient goals. It's a lifestyle change, and if you crave sweets, it would be nice to have a keto-friendly dessert on hand for when those times arise."