

Healthful Holiday Baking

Two great replacements for butter, oil, and sugar in baking projects are applesauce and prune puree.

Why?

Well, **both applesauce and prune puree can replace half of the fat in many recipes**. So if the recipe calls for 1 cup of oil, you can use ½ cup of applesauce and ½ cup of oil. You may also need to reduce the baking time by up to 25%. Watch your baked goods closely and pull them out as soon as they're cooked through.

So why do applesauce and prunes make decent fat replacements in recipes? The answer lies in the fruit. You see, **the fruit provides both moisture and structure to the baked goods**. That's why this substitution is best for foods like apple cakes or brownies, though it works well in cookies and cakes too.

Let's take this a little further. There are other benefits to these substitutions.

For example, when you add applesauce or prune puree to a recipe, you may be able to **reduce the amount of sugar**. The natural sugars in the applesauce and prune puree provide additional sweetness, which can be balanced by a reduction in the sugar you add to the recipe. To avoid over-the-top sugar content, be sure to purchase unsweetened applesauce.

By making this substitution, you're also **adding a little more fruit to the recipe!** Yay! That's more fiber and nutrients than you would have gotten with the original recipe.

So, how can you put this plan into action?



You can buy **ready-made prune puree** or just **make your own** by combining six tablespoons of hot water and eight ounces of prunes (about 23) in the blender. This makes about ¾ cup of prune puree. Note: for diabetics, this approach does increase the carbohydrate count in the end product.

And of course, you can **make your own unsweetened applesauce or pick up a jar at the store**.

Substitution Tips:

- Applesauce seems to go best with **lighter colored and flavored foods**. Think apple cakes or oatmeal cookies.
- The **prune's flavors and colors go well with chocolate and spicier treats** like gingerbread, spice cake, and brownies.
- These substitutions do work with box mixes, but you have more control over the other ingredients if you **make the entire recipe from scratch**.

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