



## **WEIGHT NEUTRALITY: Is that even possible? Plus a recipe for *Skinny Cranberry Bliss Bars***

Merry Christmas! A message that translates into lots of eating and extra calories. Seems like every day there is yet another box of goodies brought in and quietly laid on the kitchen table or counter.

Studies show that we gain one to two pounds during this busy time of the year. The problem is that those 1 to 2 pounds (or 3,500 to 7,000 additional calories) tend to stick with us all year. If you put those same 1 to 2 pounds on annually, your weight can become an issue. So

the game plan for the next 7 to 10 days is no weight gain or weight loss...maintain your current weight.

How to be weight neutral and still have a good time? Think about the number of times you reach for something sweet. Are you hungry? Stressed? Tired? For starters, try not to skip meals. Make sure you have your meals like you normally would throughout the day. Skipping breakfast or lunch may cause you to overeat during the day, making it harder to resist when you pass the “goodies,” thus you will end up consuming more calories. Bring something healthy! [Okay, okay I am the one who slides fruit and nuts on the table!]

Think about this as a giveaway to all your friends, co-workers and anyone you want to share a gift with!

## **SKINNY CRANBERRY BLISS BARS**

### **INGREDIENTS:**

2 cups all-purpose flour (Gold Medal)  
1/2 tsp baking soda  
1/4 tsp salt  
1/8 teaspoon ground cinnamon  
2/3 cup granulated sugar  
2/3 cup brown sugar, unpacked  
1/4 cup melted unsalted butter  
2 large egg whites  
1/4 cup unsweetened apple sauce  
2 tsp vanilla extract  
2/3 cup white chocolate chips or chopped white chocolate  
1/3 cup dried cranberries, chopped

### **For the Frosting:**

8 oz 1/3 less fat cream cheese, softened  
1/2 cup powdered sugar  
2 ounces white baking chocolate, melted\*  
1/3 cup dried cranberries, chopped  
1/2 tsp vanilla extract

**DIRECTIONS:**

Preheat oven to 350°F. Lightly spray a 9 x 13 inch non-stick baking pan with cooking spray. In a large bowl, combine the flour, baking soda, salt and cinnamon and stir to blend. In another bowl, whisk the sugars with the butter, egg whites, applesauce and vanilla until light and fluffy. Whisk the dry ingredients into the wet ingredients in two additions until the batter is very well blended. If the batter looks more “crumbly” than smooth, add just a drop of water at a time (ONLY if needed) until it smooth out. Fold in white chocolate chips and 1/3 cup cranberries. Spread batter onto the baking pan using the back of a measuring cup to smooth evenly. Bake 10 - 14 minutes, until the edges are light brown and a toothpick inserted comes out clean. Don't over-bake or your bars will be dry. Let it cool completely on wire rack. Meanwhile, prepare the frosting; in a large bowl, use an electric mixer to beat the cream cheese, powdered sugar and vanilla until well-blended. Frost bars and sprinkle with remaining cranberries. Drizzle with the melted white chocolate.

\*To melt the chocolate, place in a microwave safe cup and heat 15 seconds; stir. Another 15 seconds; stir until the chocolate is melted. When the chocolate sets, cut into 15 large squares (5 cuts by 3 cuts with the knife). Then cut each square in half diagonally to create triangles. Store in the refrigerator until ready to serve.

**NUTRITION INFORMATION**

Yield: 30 servings, Serving Size: 1 bar

Calories: 149; Total Fat: 5g; Saturated Fat: g; Cholesterol: 5mg; Sodium: 47mg; Carbohydrates: 24g; Fiber: 0g; Sugar: 17g; Protein: 2g

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*This is another in a weekly series of healthy recipes from Kay MacInnis, registered dietitian at Providence Health in Columbia, S.C.*

*Kay promotes health and wellness, helping cardiac and diabetes patients eat their way to healthier lives. She works in consultation with the trained chefs at Providence, combining her nutrition knowledge with their food prep know-how to create delicious, healthy dishes for patients and the public. She also conducts a number of health and wellness events for the public, including the monthly Providence Cooks! classes.*

*"She doesn't just give you the fish, she teaches you how to cook it."*

*– a Kay MacInnis fan and Providence Cooks! regular.*