

Dates, maple and pecans make this bar a perfect pick-me-up



these bars extra-delicious and maple flavoring is a key component, too. If you have trouble

finding maple extract at your grocery store, you can find several suppliers online. Cook's

puts out a pure maple extract that you can buy on Amazon or through Walmart, too.

INGREDIENTS

1 lb. Medjool dates, pitted
1 cup toasted pecans, chopped
1/2 teaspoon Himalayan pink salt
1/2 teaspoon maple extract
1 teaspoon lemon juice

DIRECTIONS

Line an 8-inch square baking dish with parchment paper. Spray paper with cooking spray.

Toast the Pecans:

Preheat oven to 350 F. Place pecans on a baking sheet and bake for about 8-10 minutes, just until beginning to brown. They will smell fantastically aromatic as they are toasting. Keep an eye on them, because you can burn pecans in the blink of an eye! Remove from oven when toasted and cool. Once cooled, finely chop. Set aside.

Puree the Dates:

Make sure all of the pits are removed from the dates, or buy pitted dates. (If using pitted dates, I always like to check to make sure they've all been pitted before putting them in the food processor, because inevitably there is a straggler.)

Place pitted dates in the bowl of your food processor. Process into a chunky paste. If there are some chunks left, no problem, they will easily incorporate into the bars.

Remove pureed dates to a mixing bowl. Stir in the toasted, chopped pecans, salt, maple extract and lemon juice. Mix well. Mixture will be sticky.

Turn mixture into the prepared baking dish and press down with your fingers or a flat spatula so that the entire dish is covered with about 1/4-inch of the date mixture. If using your fingers, you may need to coat them with a little oil to keep the mixture from sticking to them.

Refrigerate until firm. Cut into rectangles or squares and wrap each in parchment paper or plastic wrap until ready to eat.



Date, Maple & Toasted Pecan Energy Bars

Photos Susie Iventosch

By Susie Iventosch

The combination of toasted pecans, dates, maple flavoring and a little Himalayan salt is delicious! A bit of fresh lemon sets off the sweetness, just right, too. These bars are kind of like Lara Bars or the Thunderbird Real Food Bars and they are a great source of quick and lasting energy. My daughter and I were starving after a hot yoga class one day, and stopped in for a coffee drink at a café on our way home. When I spied the Texas Maple Pecan Bar it struck me as the perfect energy snack that we were craving. It was so delicious that we went home and immediately started plotting out our own recipe. This is

the recipe we came up with and we are very happy with the results.

Dates are a great source of dietary fiber and carbohydrates in the form of fruit sugar. Due to the natural fiber, the fruit is low on the Glycemic Index, and this helps to slow down the sugar absorption, resulting in a no-crash source of energy. Medjool dates, grown in Israel and other parts of the Mediterranean, are known for their soft texture and honey like taste. We use them in our Waioli Date Bars (we will share that recipe soon) and also in this recipe. I think they'd be wonderful skewered with chicken and shallots for a fun Mediterranean kebab, too.

Toasting the pecans makes

Susie can be reached at suziventosch@gmail.com. This recipe can be found on our website: www.lamorindaweekly.com If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at (925) 377-0977. Or visit <https://treksandbites.com>



GCCP Season Finale focuses on interconnectedness of cultures



ASQ

Submitted by Pamela Freund-Striplen

Gold Coast Chamber Players conclude their virtual concerts at 7 p.m. Saturday, May 1 with Dvorak's America. Virtual links remain available for one week following the concert date. Q&A with the musicians follows the premiere at 8:30 p.m.

Dvorak's America ex-

plores the impact of Spirituals and Native American music on Dvorak during his time in America, highlighting the interconnectedness of cultures. The program will feature Dvorak's String Quintet, op. 97 and the Lento from his String Quartet op. 96, both nicknamed "the American." Original music by Mary Youngblood for Native American flute, "Within My Heart" and "Beneath the Raven Moon"



Mary Youngblood with Flute

and her arrangement "Amazing Grace," offer music akin to what Dvorak heard during his stay in America.

Perhaps the greatest musical influence on Dvorak during his time in America was hearing African American Spirituals, that he proclaimed are at the heart of American music. Spirituals to be performed are "Swing Low Sweet Chariot," "By an' By," and "My Lord What a Morning." Concluding the program will be "Goin' Home" from Dvorak's New World Symphony. This famous melody was transformed into a Spiritual by William Arms Fisher, serving as a unique metaphor for the program theme, and will be



Michele Kennedy

performed by the entire ensemble.

Leading the ensemble is internationally acclaimed Bay Area favorite, the Alexander String Quartet. This concert marks one of the first performances with their new violist, David Samuel. The Alexander String Quartet has performed in the major music capitals of five continents, securing its standing among the world's premier ensembles, and a major artistic presence in its home base of San Francisco, serving since 1989 as Ensemble in Residence of San Francisco Performances and Directors of The Morrison Chamber Music Center Instructional Program at San Francisco State University.

Violist Pamela Freund-Striplen, a frequent ASQ collaborator, joins for the String Quartet. Soprano Michele Kennedy has performed in



Pamela Freund-Striplen

Carnegie Hall, Davies Symphony Hall, Bard SummerScape, Getty Museum, Lincoln Center, Powell Symphony Hall, and Washington National Cathedral. San Francisco Chronicle notes that her "graceful tonal clarity was a wonder to hear." Native American Mary Youngblood, half Seminole and half Aleut, is the first woman to professionally record the Native American Flute, and the first woman to win not just one, but two Grammy Awards for "Best Native American Music Album."

Single ticket: \$30. Concerts are streamed via YouTube. Purchase online at www.GCCPmusic.com or by calling (925) 283-3728. Please visit gccpmusic.com to find regular updates about concert offerings, to make donations, and to purchase tickets. Link provided after ticket purchase.

Lynn's Top Five Tax Season 2021 ... while the living's not easy, it's getting better

By Lynn Ballou CFP®

Well, we made it to another tax season, and "surprise," it's still not quite business as usual. Let's review five things you may want to consider before filing your returns this year, and as you get set up for 2021.

1) The only constant is change. And this is a good one. Many filers received unemployment insurance benefits last year due to massive pandemic related unemployment. Happily the latest tax law exempts these payments from federal tax (they were already state tax free). If you've already filed and declared this as income, you might need to file an amended return and receive a refund. However, at this writing, per the IRS website, they are asking that you DO NOT file a return to claim these refunds due. Hopefully they'll be able to review returns where taxpayers have reported this income and handle refunds without you initiating any pa-

perwork. Check the website (www.irs.gov) for more up-to-date information.

2) Stimulus – Did you receive everything you deserved? As of this writing there were three rounds of stimulus funds that were theoretically automatically sent to you by the IRS, two of them in 2020. However I've spoken to many who did not receive everything they felt was owed to them. For stimulus funding due to you last year but not received, you have the opportunity when you file your return to report these underpayments and request they be credited to you via your return. Please note that these stimulus funds are NOT taxable to you. If you feel you are due funds that you never received and are not required to file a tax return, this website will help you and those who are filing returns figure out how to access monies owed: Recovery Rebate Credit | Internal Revenue Service (irs.gov)

3) May 17 is the new April 15? Partially. Individual tax-

payers can now delay filing their federal and state income tax returns until May 17. And while you can delay filing and paying any balances due for 2020 until the new extended date, please note that you must still pay any 2021 estimated first quarter taxes due by April 15 to avoid interest and penalties when you file your 2021 returns next year.

4) Last minute tax reduction and tax planning idea. This year you have until May 17 to fund your 2020 IRA and Roth IRA (if eligible) contributions. For those of you who are self employed and use SEP-IRAs or other types of higher contribution limit retirement plans, as of this writing you can fund your contributions for those plans up until you file, including extensions, which can be as late as Oct. 15 this year.

5) RMD's – They're back! Taxpayers enjoyed a reprieve on the forced withdrawal of funds, aka Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs), from retirement accounts last year. Be careful as you plan for

2021 because RMDs are back on the table. Don't be caught under-withholding income taxes as you navigate what may be a return to higher taxable income. If you adjusted withholding or estimated taxes last year to account for less taxable income, you need to revisit your withholding and estimated tax plans for 2021 taking into account additional income that is not only taxed, but may in fact put you in a higher bracket. Don't wait until year-end to figure out your 2021 tax situation. Avoid penalties and interest for potentially under-withholding by getting on top of these numbers now and staying on track. Remember that your first quarter 2021 estimated taxes are still due April 15!

Hope this is helpful as you face down another challenging (and longer) tax season and start planning for 2021. On a happier note, with vaccinations on the uptick, I'm sure looking forward to unwinding the pain of the past 13 months and seeing everyone around

town again in our amazing village that is Lamorinda.



Lynn Ballou CFP® is a Senior Vice President and Partner with EP Wealth Advisors. Information used in the writing of this column is believed to be factual and up-to-date, but we do not guarantee its accuracy and it should not be regarded as a complete analysis of the subject(s) discussed. All information is derived from sources deemed to be reliable. All expressions of opinion reflect the judgment of the author as of the date of publication and are subject to change.