

ICE CREAM/FROZEN DESSERTS

## When Cancer Took Chocolate Away, This Ice Cream Got Me By

*What would you do if you had to give up chocolate forever?*

by: CAROLINE WRIGHT

October 5, 2018 | 18 Comments



SAVE

18 COMMENTS

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here are a lot of strange things that happen when you survive a health crisis that everyone tells you is statistically impossible. The space of life shifts. Living, just breathing and walking around, is this incredible gift, one that you know all too well is precious.

Not only are you walking around with the wonder of an alien who's just landed on Earth, but, if you're like me, you've changed your lifestyle so much that your own habits and body are different, too. That adds to the otherness, what can feel like solitude on dark days, which only cancer could surface.

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**This is how I came to give up two major loves of my life: chocolate and sugar.** I'd been crazy for them since I was a kid, like many of us with a well-honed sweet tooth. Then I went to culinary school, produced television shows, and wrote books to their service, essentially providing excuses to be able to spend my days eating massive quantities of chocolate and sugar without judgment. "For work."



ARTICLE



After I Survived Cancer, I Celebrated With A Birthday Cake

I discovered that I had kidney stones while I was on tour for my book *Cake Magic!*, ones that hadn't yet descended or announced themselves by inflicting their signature excruciating pain. After their removal, my doctor handed me a list of foods to avoid based on the material they so graciously tested from the sand I had peed out. At the top of it: chocolate. He gave me a look and an accompanying shrug like, *Oh well, that's too bad*, and I nearly fainted.

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"I have chronic health issues and have had brain surgery ... my issues are not life threatening ... but I so identified with your need to redefine where you find joy after the doctor restricts your life. As unique as your story is, so many people will see themselves in parts of it. I'm so glad you are willing to share your experience. Thank you! "

— Jessica K.

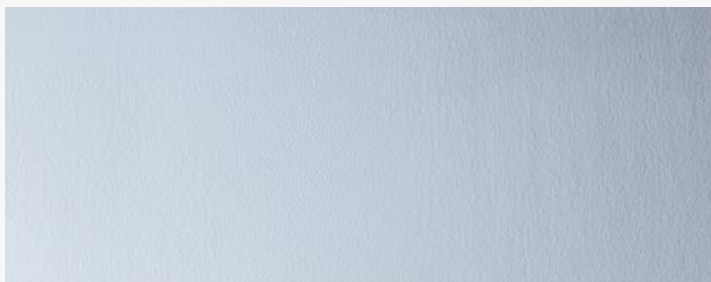
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I tried it for a few days. (Needless to say, it didn't work.) Eventually I deluded myself that just tiny bits of the good stuff wouldn't be a problem. So instead of relishing in dessert at the table like I normally would, my chocolate addiction continued with my face buried in a cabinet, nibbling at a dark chocolate bar like a fiend. Sure, it was pathetic—but what would you have done? Imagine if someone told you suddenly, one day, that you couldn't have chocolate ever again. What would you say to that?

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I bargained—with myself. Maybe there were other foods on that terrifying list (a list that, for me, on any other given day, would have borne the title “groceries”) I could cut out instead of chocolate. As I experimented with my diet, I found that I developed headaches, disorientation, and mood swings in the form of a yeast die-off, or a “Herxheimer response” for the heavily addicted—all because I had cut out sugar completely, cold turkey.

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It feels so silly to say that, living through what I've lived through, there was once a point in time that I thought my symptoms were caused by starving my sweet tooth, not seizures nor tumor growth. I suppose it's valuable here to point out that my tumor was in the part of my brain that managed essential things like emotion, judgment, and impulse control. I really *was* going crazy, which isn't something you realize when it's happening to you.

The symptoms got worse: I grew sicker and finally saw my doctor, bursting with excuses and theories (including this sugar story). She gave me a few handouts to determine where I ranked on some sort of scale in terms of anxiousness or depression—I had just handed in my third cookbook, for which I traveled to Spain and managed players in five time zones, all while raising my two sons under the age of five and renovating a 1906 home in Seattle. (And unknowingly fighting brain cancer.) My doctor declared that it was essential to find more concrete data rather than theories, as so many others seemed plausible. Which is when she ordered the MRI.

**That was the day the life I knew ended and this one began—the one in which I don't eat chocolate.** I can't say that I miss it, actually. When you convince yourself that something could have contributed to the growth of a cancer that could destroy not only your life but that of your kids, it doesn't look so appealing anymore. Suddenly, you find yourself in a place where addiction dissolves, along with so many other things: language, ego, peripheral friendships and goals, a pure faith in almost anything other than your own body and this moment. The otherness envelops you, it becomes unclear where you stop and where it begins. You become a thing to be calculated, measured, poked at and prodded: a broken-down machine in need of repair.





RECIPE



## Farmacy Kitchen's Raw Chocolate Tart

Just trust me when I say that my love of chocolate became irrelevant.

That is, until I beat the odds and survived. I am human again, not just “doing well,” but I might actually *be well*. Now my doctors and I are hopeful for decades ahead, not just months. I’m still wary of chocolate and want to keep doing all that I have been to hold onto my fortune, but I’m finding joy in eating food again. **Even though I don’t miss chocolate itself, I do miss looking forward to eating something special that just screams decadence, celebration, and comfort all at once.**

“

*That was the day the life I knew ended and this one began—the one in which I don’t eat chocolate.*

”

So it got me thinking: could I assemble an impostor chocolate flavor that’s satisfying to me? Not just carob (that I actually happen to like and my sweet tooth deeply appreciates), but *real* chocolate, complex with fruity and bitter notes and the hum of caramel or spice. I figured that if I can describe chocolate using other flavors, then maybe I could build a dessert that uses other flavors to signify chocolate.







PHOTO BY TY MECHAM

I identified ice cream as my first endeavor, inspired by an incredible plant-based local ice cream shop here in Seattle, [Frankie and Jo's](#), that has a flavor sweetened only by dates. After all, the varying stages of ice cream preparation provide a lot of opportunities for different types of ingredients to be added—steeping, stirring, blending, resting—especially one that doesn't follow a traditional method. And a good ice cream is one of those desserts that can be dressed up or down, served alone or alongside, and remains perfect in any iteration.

The process of building this ice cream took many tests, many opinions from people who inherently distrust a chocolate ice cream made by a person who hasn't eaten it in over a year. While tinkering with a teaspoon of this and a teaspoon of that, I thought to myself, *This is what perseverance looks like*. Finding comfort where comfort is no longer given, creating hope where none exists from a variety of disparate, unrecognizable sources. *This is what fighting cancer looks like*, I thought, as I pulled a rippled spoonful of my fool's chocolate ice cream that contained no chocolate.

*There is magic here still*, I thought, finally seeing it for myself in this strange new life.



SAVE



Vegan Fool's Chocolate Gelato

[View Recipe](#)

## INGREDIENTS

- 2 tablespoons maca powder
  - 1 tablespoon nutritional yeast
  - 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
  - 1/2 teaspoon xanthan gum
  - 1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
  - 1/2 cup unsweetened black or tart cherry juice (such as RW Knudsen)
  - 2 ounces cocoa butter (solid is fine)
  - 2 tablespoons molasses
  - 2 tablespoons maple syrup
  - 2 cups unsweetened coconut milk (such as SO Coconut, from a carton; without cream layer)
  - 1/4 cup roasted chicory root granules
  - 1 cup coconut cream (from a box, not a can)
  - 3 large Medjool dates, pitted
  - 3/4 cup unsweetened carob chips
  - 1 1/2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
- Ice cream maker, jar insert frozen overnight according to manufacturer's instructions

*What would you do if you had to give up chocolate forever? Let us know in the comments below.*

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Raw Chocolate Tart



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Raw Chocolate Tart

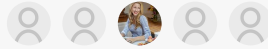
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WRITTEN BY:

### Caroline Wright

Before her diagnosis, Caroline wrote a book on cakes called *Cake Magic!*. She started developing a birthday cake using her gluten-free mix found in that book. Check out other recipes she's developing for her new life—and the stories behind them—on her blog, The Wright Recipes. Her next book, *Catalan Food*, written with chef Daniel Olivella, comes out in early September from Clarkson Potter.

  [carolinewrightbooks.com](http://carolinewrightbooks.com)

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**Maureen** April 5, 2019

This is one of the most inspiring pieces of writing I have encountered in a long time. Thank you for generously sharing your difficult journey publicly.

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**Sarah A.** October 13, 2018

This recipe looks amazing! I work with cancer patients and some of them have stopped eating sugar so I love to share your recipes with them. Keep em coming!

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**Sarah C.** October 9, 2018



such a beautiful read, such a beautiful recipe. I love the sounds of this and the challenge of pushing myself to rethink what chocolate needs to be.

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**Jessie A.** October 6, 2018

Beautiful writing, my friend. Sounds delicious!

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**Ali** October 6, 2018

Love this! I am vegan and earlier this year had to give up chocolate and all other forms of caffeine for (less dramatic) health reasons. The first week or so I was miserable, but I have found solace in rooibos based chai, teeccino, and making refined sugar free fruit desserts. I was so obsessed with chocolate for so many years that I had forgotten about all the incredible flavors and perfumes of seasonal fruit! Anyway, I am so glad you're better, and I am interested in trying this recipe, although ice cream season might be over in our drafty house for this year...

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**Elissa F.** October 6, 2018

Chocolate has always been my first choice when presented. I'm a healthy mountain biker and foodie that was diagnosed 4 yrs ago with GERD (acid reflux). I went on PPI's for about a month and then stopped because I felt so much better. I also eat well and followed the Mediterranean style of eating. 16 months ago I went Plant-based and felt even better on all fronts. Chocolate & acid producing foods are supposed to be restricted. No eating late at night, and eat only small portions. I forgot I had GERD until last month when my symptoms came back. The most difficult part being plant based is finding great, easy dessert recipes. Now that I'm following GERD guidelines on a Plant- Based diet desserts are even more tenuous. Thank you for this recipe.

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**Elissa F.** October 6, 2018

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**Kristin** October 5, 2018

Now THIS is news I can use. I can't eat chocolate either (migraines) and people's eyes always bug out when I tell them. Like you, I barely miss it these days (easier to give something up when you know it will have you crying-on-the-bathroom-floor sick for two days afterwards), but I do miss the feeling of a special treat. And, like you, I found that fancy ice cream did the trick. I'll put salted caramel gelato up against chocolate any day of the week! But I am fascinated to try this and see how fooled I am. Thanks for the recipe, from a fellow traveler of the weird food restrictions path.

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**Caroline W.** October 6, 2018

So nice to have a food buddy! It warms my heart to hear you've followed a similar path (sorry about those migraines, though) with food. I will be SUPER curious to know your thoughts on this ice cream, if it hits the spot!

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**Grace** October 5, 2018

I love reading about your journey and the recipes which are healthy and savory. Thank you for your creativity and your candid sharing. It will be great to read more!

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**Caroline W.** October 6, 2018

Thank you, Grace! That means a lot.

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**Jessica K.** October 5, 2018

This writing is so beautiful. I want to make this recipe now as a celebration of living and triumph over struggle! I have chronic health issues and have had brain surgery ... my issues are not life threatening ... but I so identified with your need to redefine where you find joy after the doctor restricts your life. As unique as your story is, so many people will see themselves in parts of it. I'm so glad you are willing to share your experience. Thank you!

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**Caroline W.** October 6, 2018

Thank you, Jessica. Sharing feels like celebration to me, so I'm glad you see it that way too! Would love to hear if you make this recipe!

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**Amy** October 5, 2018

I love everything about this article. If I had to give up chocolate forever I'd probably do a late night google search for "what to do if you have to give up chocolate" and hope to goddess that the search optimizes for your article and recipe. Not only would I find this excellent-sounding dessert but your wholly unique point of view. Thank you for sharing this!

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**Caroline W.** October 6, 2018

Thanks, Amy! I do hope that this recipe 1) helps others as it has me and 2) actually conjures chocolate for other people and I'm not indeed crazy! ;)

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**Jeff B.** October 5, 2018

This is inspiring and wonderful! Getting to hear about your struggle to use food carefully and with limitations while experiencing food with love and pleasure is so useful. I know your food always tastes good, and knowing the thought you're also giving to his its impact on your body and health makes your recipes even more appealing!

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**Caroline W.** October 6, 2018

Thank you, Jeff! xo

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