



**alternative
alchemy**



JAMIE HALL

alternative alchemy

Recipes & Mindful Baking
WITH CBD, HERBS, AND ADAPTOGENS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY THE INGALLS

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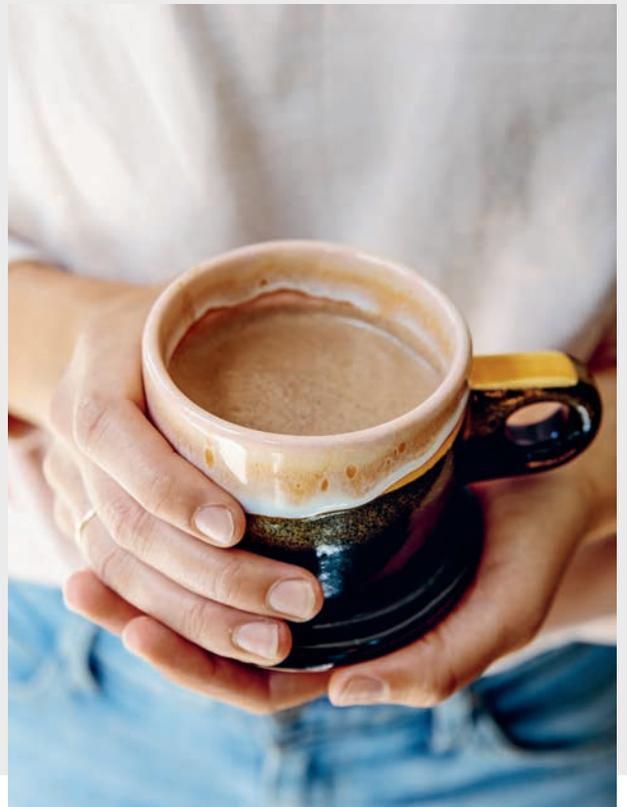
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this book is for alice.

**WITHOUT HER IT WOULDN'T EXIST
AND I AM SO GRATEFUL.**



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RECIPE SYMBOLS

 GLUTEN-FREE

 VEGAN



introduction

I FOUND CBD AFTER THE BIRTH OF MY DAUGHTER. I WAS A NEW MOTHER, and her arrival was joyful, but also life changing. As time passed, I found myself feeling decidedly *less* joyful. I became acutely aware I was not myself; I had instead developed the sensation I was on mute, or trapped under glass. Long mornings flowed into afternoons, and day and night no longer carried much distinction. I was always awake, it seemed, but never very present. At all times I carried a tiny anxiety in the pit of my stomach—a small but persistent flame I could never quite quell, and when I did get a chance to sleep, I found myself thinking instead of resting, unable to stop the frantic rhythm of my brain. It was distracting at best and terrifying at its worst, and either way, it felt completely wrong. I was supposed to be blissfully engaged in maternal bonding with my baby but instead I was staring at a tiny stranger.

When I got up the courage to bring these concerns to my doctor (terrified she would, at this admission, confirm I was horribly defective and unfit to mother my child), I was instead shocked by her nonchalance. “It’s perfectly safe to take certain antidepressants while nursing,” she told me without looking up. “Lots of people do.”

The trouble was, I’ve never been one of those people. Not that I haven’t tried them—I have, which is how I know. And so I began to look into other things. This was, I should mention, before CBD was so mainstream as to be offered as an add-on for an acai bowl or brewed into healthy teas. In California, when all this was starting, medical marijuana was permitted with a prescription only—and so I got one.

My first attempts weren’t terribly successful: I’m not a person who likes to be high (not usually anyway). I tend to have a little fire of anxiety burning at all times which, while occasionally frustrating, also keeps me going, in full type A glory. There was too much THC, I quickly realized, in any of the tinctures I tried in my early trials and forays into herbal anxiety relief.

I read about CBD long before I found it. A brand called Charlotte’s Web earned some media attention when they began to provide CBD oil for a little girl with crippling epilepsy. The oil, the articles revealed, changed Charlotte’s life, lessening her seizures from moment-to-moment to just occasional and even rare. Clearly, CBD managed to isolate something and tone it down, a refined take on what THC does on a grand scale, and I wanted to try it. As you might have guessed, it worked.

CBD has allowed me to take my mental health back in a way I never thought I would—not because it fixes everything, but instead because it’s subtle and lacking the side effects I often fear. It’s also easy to obtain: because it doesn’t require a prescription I’m not reliant on anyone to get it. The health-care industry is not as easy to navigate as it should be. By finding CBD, a supplement that’s available over the counter and at a reasonable price point, I compromise nothing. CBD has been life-changing—not because I drank it in the overpriced lemonade sold by a boutique hotel or because it’s quickly snowballed into the next “it” thing, but because it truly offers relief I can control.

I have sold my treats locally for over a year now—mostly to friends and local mothers, but to others, too. I’ve had a tremendous amount of support from our small community in Los Angeles,



a place with many young families who favor natural remedies. To date, I have participated in a handful of pop-up shops, catered parties, mommy circles, and retreats. I love learning more about it and it's been a wonderful way to meet people and learn more. CBD has allowed me to get a new footing, a type of identity after having children—as not just a baker, writer, or mother but also a very preliminary type of healer and educator on something I've found to offer a tremendous value and sense of community.

What Is CBD and How Does It Work?

CBD oil is a high-cannabinol (CBD) and low-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) variety of cannabis extract marketed as a dietary supplement. CBD's first successfully documented extraction took place at Harvard in the 1940s. By 1946, scientists had written about its ability to provide therapeutic relief

without altering mental abilities, but it wasn't until later that scientists began to investigate how it worked and why. In a (very) simplified nutshell: CBD is thought to exist in several kinds of plants, not just marijuana or hemp, as a natural defense mechanism for the plant itself. When consumed, plants with CBD can change the brain chemistry of the larger animals that eat them. It's likely a bit of a coincidence that it works toward successfully manipulating our brain in a helpful way.

CBD isn't the only plant compound that changes the human brain in a unique way when consumed: Opium, for example, promotes calm and lethargy and was used as a painkiller for centuries in its natural state. Nicotine is part of the tobacco plant and makes for a stimulant. For centuries, Peruvian natives have chewed the leaves of the coca plant, a stimulant, which is also thought to alleviate altitude sickness. These types of plants, in their natural state, are gently medicinal—it's when we start tinkering and refining them that they get a bad name (and often far more potent).

As CBD has gained popularity, more brands have become available. This book includes three of my favorites. The first, of course, is Charlotte's Web. I trust the brand and value its approach tremendously. Originally used as an anti-seizure medication for a small child, Charlotte's Web has a no-frills product design that's often less visually appealing than some of the bright, beautiful new brands I see populating the shelves, but it's a mild-flavored, lightweight oil that has maintained its quality for longer than almost any other. While it is not fully organic, the plants used are and the company's entire farming process is pointed in that direction.



Three additional, newer options I love are Best Buds for Life, which is grown organically and rigorously tested and based in MCT oil; Rosebud, which is also organically grown and lab-tested without artificial ingredients of any kind; and Feals, another tried-and-true brand I trust. All are full-spectrum CBD, which means nothing is omitted and the oil still contains a small amount of THC, though it falls under the legal limit to be called CBD oil (.03 percent).

CBD is not the same thing as traditional marijuana, though its relative newness on the scene makes for a lack of education on the compound. People often mistake CBD for THC or simply consider them to be the same thing. CBD lacks the psychedelic capabilities of THC and the two compounds affect the body very differently. CBD, taken daily, works more like a supplement, with subtle effects that develop gradually (rather than a quick, stoned high).

CBD works with what scientists have now identified as the endocannabinoid system, a network of receptors and transmitters that regulate the body as situations, stressors, and other stimulations occur. If we're hurt, strained, or stressed, our endocannabinoid system produces more or less of what we need to feel better, and it affects everything from memory to activity and appetite.

Some scientists have suggested that, long before we began farming with pesticides and curbing our livestock and animals' ability to find their own food sources, we probably consumed a lot more CBD via the natural food chain than we do presently—which promotes the idea of taking a bit more every day to make up for our depleted, modern-day levels of something we may have once had much more of.

While many people suggest they feel an instant calming effect while taking CBD, the larger results can be more easily summed up as an absence of what you'd otherwise start to feel: anxiety, inflammation, chronic pain, and tension in the body. Because of this, it can work much like an antidepressant, building up in the body over time to offer relief from depression and anxiety. It also appears to work over many doses to dull pain. Topical application offers inflammation relief for bug bites and rashes as well as countless other things, and I'm comfortable using it on my children, too. Brands like Mary's Medicinal transdermal patches and Foria's suppositories and sprays offer relief for everything from backaches to menstrual cramps. I also love CBD as moisturizing facial oil and massage oil. Ojai Dirt Candy is an amazing massage blend that uses frankincense, sage, and sandalwood with CBD that my family found on a trip to Ojai a few years ago. I'm also really into Cannuka—a brand that combines CBD with manuka honey—for lip and face moisturizing, as well as Kana LIT face oil. If CBD isn't readily available where you live it's very easy to order online. Fleurmarche.com is my go-to, and there are a myriad of others.

CBD research is still in the works: New applications and studies are released frequently and there is a steady stream of articles and claims, which can be overwhelming. Research, by design, takes time and CBD is a relatively new focus for most of us, so it's difficult to say with certainty what it does across the board for every person. The attributes that seem unwavering are its natural, gentle ability to alter the body without changing our mental abilities and awareness. CBD is not a mind-altering substance but a body-regulating one instead.

As mentioned above, there are multiple types of CBD. I use only full-spectrum, which means there are still small amounts of THC present (but not enough, typically, to be noticeable). I like

to use the analogy of an egg white and egg yolk to properly explain. You can certainly eat egg whites only—many people do—and they offer lower calories and still taste pretty good. The yolks, too, offer something—a higher protein count and filling fats. However, an egg is at its very best when left intact, isn't it? Nature put the white and yolk together and maybe there's a lot to be said for that natural, symbiotic relationship. That's how I think of the CBD and THC grown in hemp and marijuana plants. Sometimes we refine things and they're better, but more often than not we tend to overdo it. I encourage you to find what works for you.

How to Eat It and Dosing

As this book indicates, CBD is most effective when consumed with healthy fats or food and the recipes here are for 15 milligrams of CBD per portion. Fifteen milligrams usually works out to be about four to five drops of oil. I encourage you to make sure you have a calibrated pipette (a dropper with the measurements clearly indicated). Several varieties of oil come with a pipette that's labeled with several milligram servings and can work as a guide.

Many brands of CBD suggest a higher dose than 15 milligrams, but microdosing is my preferred method of consumption. It allows you to gauge where you stand and stop if you feel like you should. The idea of a microdose also works well with using CBD as a supplement, taken several times a day. Remember, our goal here isn't to go back to our long-standing ideas on cannabis; the goal is very different. We're not trying to instantly "feel" anything except calm.

CBD doesn't have the ability to bowl you over like THC might. One of the most frequently asked questions I get is, "Can you take too much?" You can take too much of almost anything, can't you? But is CBD likely to leave you unable to drive or make sense? No. It might make you sleepy, but like I said, it's a subtle enhancement, so don't imagine narcolepsy or anything like it. Just start small and add on bit by bit; you'll be fine.

As for my personal CBD consumption, I like to drink a latte with it in the morning, have a snack midday, and something savory with oil for dinner. If I want to ensure a nice, heavy sleep I usually take another bedtime dose, too. Bedtime doses are nice because they can be mixed with other sleep-enhancing herbs like ashwagandha root or soothing blue butterfly pea flower for added benefits. You'll notice many of the recipes include herbs and adaptogens, because while CBD is wonderful, it's not the only naturally occurring herbal remedy the world offers.

These recipes offer CBD in small portions that allow for higher doses, if you want them. You can use nut milks with CBD combined with a cake recipe that provides more, and top that with hot fudge sauce. Likewise, if you find microdoses are more your style, feel free to omit the CBD in all recipes but one and keep it small.

Occasionally I use pans in a size you might not have, but that shouldn't throw you too much. I offer up a dosing based on the size and amount of people the dish can feed, but I'm no math whiz. I estimate 15 milligrams per serving, but more won't hurt you (neither will less). You can also move the dosing up a notch (many people like 30 milligrams; some like far, far more). CBD won't leave you blindly compromised like marijuana has a reputation for doing. It is not the same thing.

It's important to note that certain items like cookies and frostings, sauces, and individually portioned drinks and puddings are always easy to work with because you can dose them after



making them. Rather than adding the CBD prior to cooking or baking, you can wait to add the oil once the food is portioned out, offering more or less oil depending on the individual. When it's possible to do this I've noted this in the recipe itself, so keep an eye out.

Herbs, Adaptogens, and How to Cook with Them

Just as pharmaceuticals can offer relief to some, so can herbs and adaptogens (natural herbal substances that help the body adapt to stress and regulate body functions) such as reishi or Chaga mushrooms and Mucuna fruit powder. Find what works for you and hold on to it.

CBD becomes compromised at high temperatures, so you'll notice the cooking times don't exceed 350° Fahrenheit (180° Celsius) and whenever possible the CBD is added at the end of the cooking process. Adaptogens and herbs follow a similar rule and are, when possible, included in recipes that I don't bake or heat up on a stove top at all because they're more potent that way.

Likewise, cooking temperatures vary from oven to oven. Having recently purchased a beautiful, new, very fancy (in comparison to my previous) oven and range, I now know the cheaper version that came with my house tended to cook things much faster. I've also noticed, in testing, this is not a phenomenon specific to me but instead rather typical: The nicer the oven, the longer the cook time tends to be. (I've had great success, when cook temperatures on certain ovens run long, using the convection feature, if available, which circulates the hot air and makes the oven cook faster; just make sure to keep a close eye on things if you use this.) I've tried to

“The recipes, techniques, and ingredients are simple . . . designed to help you feel good.”

be as careful as possible and make notes of this in individual recipes, but remember, for herbs and oils, low and slow is always better than too hot and too fast.

There’s also something to be said about food and health. As an underlying principle of this entire book, I’ll say simply: What you eat matters. I am a runner and acutely aware that our bodies run on sugar for energy; sugar is not bad, but too much of anything is usually not good. I’ve never been more aware of that than after having children. Certain sugars and dyes, in particular, make my kids go crazy; it makes most kids hyper. If we’re trying to get our health under control with CBD, it doesn’t make a whole lot of sense to fill these recipes with foods that might directly counteract that effort.

The sugars in these recipes, for the most part, are unrefined and that is intentional. While sugar is sugar, these recipes are constructed to avoid a spike in your blood sugar. Sugar can also function as an inflammatory—the *opposite* of CBD. Likewise, gluten is far from bad, and a few of these recipes even have good old white flour (when I really felt like the taste was impossible to replicate or utterly unsatisfying without, because things really should taste good), but for the most part I use an alternative because for many people gluten can trigger other autoimmune issues. This is *not* me saying you have a gluten intolerance and should never eat gluten again. I would never say that. The chocolate I use is always dark chocolate and as unprocessed as I can find, and the peanut butter is natural (and can always be swapped for almond butter or cashew butter, or for those who are nut-free, sunflower seed butter). An oat and coconut flour blend would also work if you’re not an almond eater. Above all, these recipes are meant to be delicious and fun. You should want to eat them while also feeling good about what you’re eating.

Simplicity and Baking

These recipes are based on a holistic, health-conscious, and dietary restriction-friendly take on traditional recipes while also using CBD as a supplement to promote these same principles. The recipes, techniques, and ingredients are simple, mirroring the lifestyle behind them. Many of the recipes are hearty, protein-rich snacks designed to fuel the brain and body between meals rather than empty, sugar-filled pastries and desserts dressed to impress. My treats are somewhat rustic and always thoughtfully created and prepared, designed to be eaten daily and to help you continue to feel good. They are never fussy and rarely overly indulgent. They’re designed for eating while helping the body work optimally.

Most of these treats are made in a single bowl with minimal prep time. Some recipes are vegan while others use eggs, dairy, and traditional flour. Depending on your own dietary needs and wants, you can usually swap back and forth between vegan and non-vegan options without

a lot of drama (if you want to use an egg when I suggest flax, banana, or another bonding agent, by all means, go for it—I promise I don't mind). But the guiding ideas never change: Recipes always call for minimally processed, quality ingredients like grass-fed butter and whole milk, free from antibiotics and pesticides. Organic or locally grown options are always emphasized above all others—eat intuitively.

The basics section of this book includes most of the recipes you'll use as building blocks for *other* recipes. I've included a dosing of CBD in these basic recipes, but feel free to omit it if you're using it in a larger recipe (likewise, if you want a higher dosing, this provides an easy way to achieve that). Nut milks create a foundation for all dairy-free baking, and while many of these ingredients can be used interchangeably in many of these recipes, I usually prefer nut-based milks to the real thing. I like the taste, for one thing, but it's also easier on my stomach. You're not me, and I get that, so bake however you feel comfortable.

Making nut and oat milk at home was revolutionary for me. I never run out of milk or panic when it's low because new, fresh, delicious milk is so easy, and (in the case of cashew milk) fast to make. Almonds, unlike cashews, require straining. Cheesecloth works, although for anyone regularly making almond milk I suggest purchasing a mesh nut milk bag (available on Amazon).

Likewise, learning how to make yogurt was equally mind-blowing. I've paid up to twelve dollars for coconut and cashew yogurts, and while some of them are worth it (I'm looking at you, Fermentation Farm), many aren't any better than what I make on my own with the addition of probiotic capsules.

Food affects your body's ability to absorb CBD. When your stomach is full, you're able to absorb more cannabinoids because of bioavailability. CBD is fat-soluble, which means the more CBD that's absorbed by your bloodstream, the more potent the effect. While some research hints at the lower levels of bioavailability offered in edibles (versus tinctures), my own experiences suggest a full stomach and healthy fat make for a more even, level CBD experience.

I designed the lattes to be fast and portable, filled with other healthy herbs to kick-start the body while playing on the idea of this fat absorption—cashews and almonds specifically, with their healthy fats and oils. When there was more of a need I moved into treats: cookies, cakes, pudding, and pastries.

People will tell you baking is all about precision, and some of it is, but that's usually the baking I find tedious and only do when I want to check my reading comprehension levels or impress someone. I like to bake somewhat creatively and part of that is figuring something out—improving it or making it my own (if you try that with laminated dough recipes like croissants or puff pastry you'll end up with an oily mess, I promise).

I began my baking career as an assistant baker, shadowing a very skilled pastry chef while in my mid-twenties, after a series of unfortunate office jobs. The baker I worked with used a single plastic measuring cup for all measurements and practiced a lot of intuition. We mixed flour and nuts to add complexities and when one fruit was out of season we made up new combinations based on what we had and what sounded good together. Nobody ever complained (though I won't lie, I've had some kitchen disasters, but that's part of the process). I did learn how to make croissants, but I've never enjoyed making them as much as I imagined I would and I never feel very good after eating them. As it turns out, I like complex, healthful additions like

nut butters and oats because my body seems to know how to process them and they make for a more efficient type of fuel. When my body runs on good foods to begin with, the CBD is only *more* effective—it has less to regulate when my body is already functioning optimally.

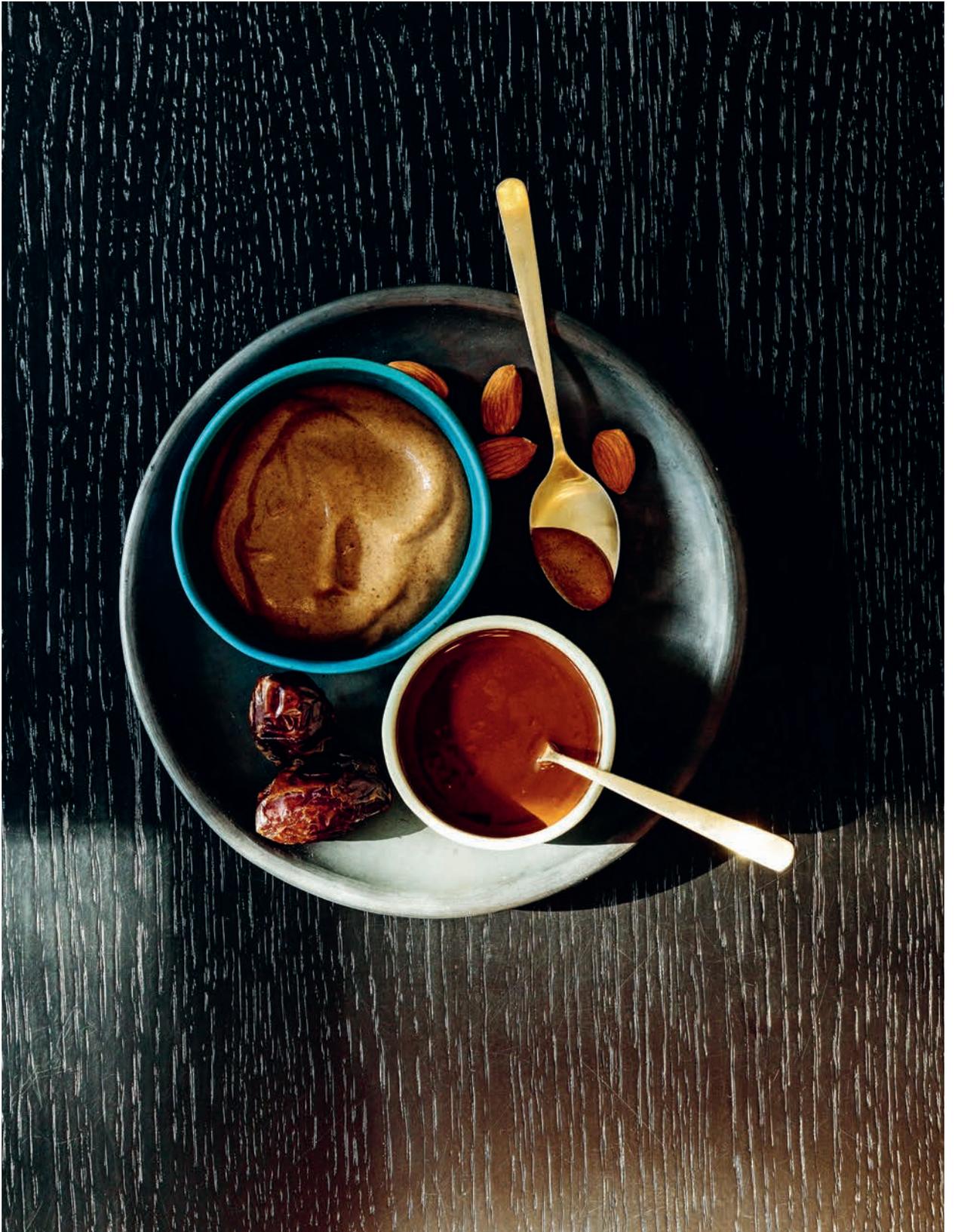
These treats run more rustic than fancy and are meant to be hearty and delicious, a healthier take on some standard goodies, and CBD is a healthy complement.

The hallmark of these recipes (beyond the CBD, of course) is simplicity. I always note pan sizes—typically an 8 x 12-inch (20 x 30-cm) or 5 x 7-inch (13 x 18-cm) mini rectangular pan, a standard-size pie pan, or a 9-inch (23-cm) round springform—and for my cookies I use a Farberware 1-inch (2.5-cm) scoop—but here’s a helpful tip: Anything will work. Don’t have my scoop? Use a tablespoon. Don’t have the corresponding pan size? Use what you have—baking times can be modified by watching closely and keeping plenty of toothpicks on hand to check for wobbly centers. I also use a Vitamix blender, but any high-speed blender will work for these recipes.

This brings us to another important tidbit: Ovens and cooking times are finicky things. Cookbooks lead us to believe oven temperatures are far more consistent from oven to oven than they truly are. These recipes were, on average, tested in three ovens and during the course of creating this book I switched from the oven we inherited when we bought our house (nothing special and a total eyesore), which baked everything an average of five to eight minutes faster (and more unevenly) than our current fancy new oven. The other “test” oven was electric, since both of mine are gas. Cooking times generally have a range, but when baking anything for the first time set a low-expectation time and once that dings keep checking every three to five minutes. Almond flour’s superpower (beyond lacking gluten and generally being easier on autoimmune issues) is burning far faster than regular flour, plus it’s good for the soul to watch a recipe as it cooks. Breathe a little and use your oven lamp to watch the alchemy unfold. This type of baking is meant to be meditative and calming; it doesn’t have to define you. And like yoga, it isn’t about doing it “right”; it’s about doing it the way you need it.

In the event your pan sizes create a different amount of servings per recipe (i.e., a 6-inch round pan would usually yield six 1-inch [2.5-cm] slices), simply do a little math and remeasure your dosing. You can also skip the precise inch measurements and measure out your own serving sizes. That’s why the measured pipette comes in handy. Each dose should go from 15 milligrams (what I use) and constitutes a modest dose, to about 30 milligrams—which is more typical for THC edibles that are meant to really make you “feel” differently. (Remember, CBD doesn’t really do that in the same way because it’s not psychedelic, so I try to think of health benefits over a noticeable change in mental state. You should feel more centered—nothing else.)

Beyond that, I use whole ingredients for these recipes and despite mostly being sweets and treats, these are real food recipes and they will melt, get soft, and start to separate the longer they’re left out. Food is meant to break down and it doesn’t last forever. A frosting that holds its shape sitting in the sun at an outdoor picnic isn’t a frosting you want to eat. I’ve deliberately made these foods *without* fillers and stabilizers. If you want things to hold up, give them a stint in the fridge to firm them up, and above all, eat them within a few days of cooking them. I’ve included gluten-free  and vegan  symbols on each recipe page to help you navigate your journey through this book.



basics

CHAPTER ONE



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