

Aquafaba

THE MIRACLE EGG REPLACER

Alessandra Felice reveals just how useful humble chickpea brine can be to vegans.....

AQUAFABA (BEAN LIQUID) is a term used to describe the brine or the liquid from tinned or cooked beans

which can be used as an egg replacer – and it's taking the vegan community by storm! It can be used as a thickener, emulsifier, binder and more, so is perfect for forming many vegan dishes from meringues and macaroons to marshmallows and waffles – even vegan mayonnaise and cheese.

This liquid is very close in consistency to egg whites, and the proteins and starches in the brine are similar to the ones found in eggs – this is why they work as a foaming agent and an emulsifier.

Chickpeas are the legumes that have been mainly used for this purpose, but all other beans should give similar results. I have personally had

success with kidney, navy and cannellini beans. The easiest way is to use the brine directly from the tin, but you can slowly cook dried beans in water until you get the aquafaba. If the bean juice is too watery, just heat it until it is the same consistency as egg whites!

There are many recipes where it could be fun to experiment with aquafaba to help both long-term and new vegans recreate their childhood favourites. Here's a few ideas and tips to help create your perfect dish...



Vegan meringue

In a stand mixer, beat up the foam from a tin of chickpeas and whip it up, adding sugar until it reaches the consistency of stiff-peaked egg whites. Be patient, especially if using a hand mixer and don't cut back on the time needed to beat. The meringue must be shiny, very thick (almost a paste) and not too airy, otherwise it may collapse during cooking. Adding lemon and corn starch will help stabilise the meringue and help it to dry. Have fun adding colours and flavours and use it to top a delicious vegan lemon meringue pie!

Vegan macaroons

It's a slightly more complicated recipe than the meringue as more ingredients are involved, but it's so worth it. There are many variations online and they're easy to find. A basic recipe uses finely ground almonds, caster sugar, icing sugar and cream of tartar to give shape and substance to the macaroon cookies. Aquafaba is beaten first until stiff peaks form, then caster sugar and flavourings/colourings are added until the meringue base is glossy and shiny. At this point ground almonds and icing sugar are folded in by hand. You need to be gentle with it and add half the mixture first, then the other. This way your macaroon base will remain fluffy. It can then be piped into discs as with the classic version, then baked.

Vegan chocolate mousse

Aquafaba gives vegan chocolate mousse that airy, fluffy and smooth texture that it's really hard to achieve with avocado, tofu, coconut or nuts. You only need two or three ingredients to experience this silky piece of heaven in your mouth. Melt a bar of vegan chocolate in a bain-marie, then whip the brine to stiff peaks. Once the chocolate has melted and cooled down, gently fold in the whisked aquafaba one scoop at a time. Divide between little pots and refrigerate for a couple of hours. You can also use as a topping on a pie crust. Add extracts to flavour, or orange and lemon zest and more sugar to taste if desired.

Vegan marshmallows

The addition of a couple of teaspoons of xanthan or guar gum and a teaspoon of cream of tartar along with sugar will give aquafaba the gooey texture of marshmallows. Bake for a couple of hours at around 100°C/Gas Mark ¼, slice and enjoy! You can also use the marshmallow fluff to decorate cupcakes, cakes and brownies.

Vegan waffles

Aquafaba meringue added to your waffle batter will transform them into a tasty upgraded version. They'll be crispy on the outside and moist and airy on the inside as with the traditional counterpart. As in other recipes, make sure to add the whipped mixture slowly and gently.

Vegan mayonnaise

Don't limit yourself to sweet treats though – try it out in savoury dishes as well. Use a blender to combine chickpea brine, a little salt and ground mustard and vinegar. Steadily drizzle in some neutral oil until well emulsified, refrigerate for 1 hour, then spread on your favourite sandwich. No need for store-bought mayo anymore!

Vegan cheese

The same emulsifying property as with the mayonnaise works great in vegan cheese making as well. Instead of using soy lecithin, blend the brine with the rest of your cheese recipe ingredients and it will have that stretchy and melty texture that goes perfectly on a pizza.



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Alessandra is a nutritional therapist and a medicinal chef. Born in Italy, she developed her passion for cooking at a young age and developed a strong belief in the healing power of food. There is nothing more that Alessandra loves than to share her knowledge of preparing sinful vegan desserts and chocolates!



Mini strawberry meringue cookies

By Alessandra Felice

Makes 20 | Prep 15 mins |

Cook 2 hrs | Calories 56 (per cookie)

- 1 x 400ml (14fl oz) tin of chickpea brine**
- 225 (8oz) caster sugar**
- 1 tsp vanilla extract**
- 1 tsp cream of tartar**
- 2 tsp beetroot powder, or 1 tsp of red natural food colouring**
- 5-6 drops of strawberry extract**

- 1** Preheat the oven to 100°C/Gas Mark ¼. Line a baking tray with parchment paper. Pour the chickpea brine in a mixer bowl and beat for about 10 minutes until it becomes white and stiffer in texture. Add the vanilla extract, cream of tartar, beetroot powder or colouring and extract. Beat again until incorporated. Continue whipping while adding the sugar a little at a time, until the mixture reaches a stiff peak consistency. It will probably take between 5-10 minutes. (I used a hand mixer and it took 10 minutes, but it will probably take less with a standing one). Incline your mixing bowl and if the batter doesn't move or slide then you have the right consistency.
- 2** Pipe or spoon the cookies onto the baking parchment, leaving a little space in between each one, then bake in the oven for 2 hours. Remove from the oven and allow to cool a little before lifting out of the tray – they will be a little bit fragile at first. Leave to cool, then enjoy with a nice cup of tea or with your favourite ice cream!

