

THE WELLNESS MAMALAH

BY JENNIFER WISE



We've been on a bit of a yogurt kick all summer and we've recently introduced the idea of granola into our breakfast routine.

Early Morning Granola

I don't buy granola bars. But first, a back-to-school story.

Once upon a time, when my youngest was two and my oldest was six and there were two more kids in between, we all took a little trip to Target with a school supply list in hand. It was the end of August and the heat had obviously gone to my head, as we were in the back-to-school aisle because why wouldn't a six year old need several hundred sharpened pencils to start off his career in first grade.

We filled our cart with all sorts of erasers and notebooks and crayons and all the tissue boxes in the whole wide world because that is what the list said and I am a list-follower. If a child of mine needs a set of highlighters in pink, blue, green, yellow and purple and all the packs in the store contain all the colors but purple, I will order a single purple highlighter on Amazon. I can't help myself.

Eventually, our little group made it to the checkout lane where I strategically placed myself between the candy bars and my children, while unloading the cart and paying. I know you will

understand when I say that the only real way to get everyone safely back through the parking lot and into the car was to load the three younger kids into the shopping cart, and use one hand to steer it while holding on to the oldest child with my other hand. The shopping bags, obviously, had nowhere else to go but underneath the cart.

Can you see where this is going?

We all made it into the car, buckled up and drove home.

The whole way home, I felt weird, like I was forgetting something. And also like I was sitting on something very uncomfortable. But I routinely walk on Lego so I'm used to feeling that way.

I pulled into the driveway, unloaded all the kids, opened the trunk and *oh my goodness*. Hmm. All the Target bags were still piled nicely underneath my shopping cart – in the Target parking lot, where we were not anymore.

I was very sad.

And when I sat down on the floor to wallow in the knowledge that I'd have to school supply shop a second

time, and still felt something uncomfortable underneath me, I finally checked. It was a granola bar. Not only did I lose all of our school supplies, I had walked through Target with half a granola bar stuck to the back of my skirt. I am very classy.

This was not one of my finer moments. When I called Target to see if anyone had found my bags and brought them back to the store, I discovered that, sadly, no one did.

I do not have a good relationship with granola bars, so I don't buy them – they generally contain high fructose corn syrup and I don't like that either. A while back, I shared a favorite granola bar recipe of ours right here on this page. I've made a few batches of them this week and they are ready for lunchbox duty.

I am not usually so organized when it comes to school snacks, or school anything, really. I have been very lucky these past 12+ mommy-ing years. There have been years when I worked part time from home and there have been other years when I haven't worked, but this school year will be the first that I am working outside the house. For hours every day. And I am panicking. When will the laundry, cleaning and food shopping (forget

about any actual cooking) happen? Mamas who have been doing this for years, I salute you. I really do. I am in awe of you. And now I need to learn to be you.

I'm really trying. I spent the month of August trying to organize myself. I am a sucker for organizational strategies. I love bins that come in assorted sizes, colorful pens to label things and if there's a pretty notebook in the Target dollar bin, it's a pretty sure bet that I already own one. Among many other things, I've been brainstorming breakfast ideas, specifically ones that the kids can pull together themselves in the morning. We've been on a bit of a yogurt kick all summer and we've recently introduced the idea of granola into our breakfast routine. Except, granola is very pricey. If I could make my own granola bars, I was pretty sure I could make my own granola. It took a few tries and, after combining several recipes and making a few batches, this is the granola you are going to want to try.

We are calling this dose of yumminess Early Morning Granola because we have to be out the door by 7 a.m. this year. Wish us luck – we're going to need it.

Ingredients:

5 cups of 1-minute rolled oats
1 cup chopped walnuts or almonds
¾ cup melted coconut oil
½ cup honey
¼ cup light brown sugar
½ cup cocoa powder
1 tsp vanilla extract
4 tsp cinnamon
Pinch of sea salt
Optional: ½ cup mini chocolate chips or chopped chocolate

Directions

Start by preheating the oven to 275°F and lining two rimmed baking sheets with parchment paper.

Combine the rolled oats and chopped nuts in a big bowl. In another bowl, combine the melted coconut oil, honey, brown sugar, cocoa powder, vanilla extract, cinnamon and sea salt and mix very well. Pour the wet ingredients into the dry ones and mix well,

until all the oats are covered.

Divide the mixture into two halves and spread each half on a baking sheet, patting the layer down until it is flat. Bake, uncovered, for 30-40 minutes, or until the granola feels dry to the touch and has turned a golden brown color. Be sure to mix the granola on the pan every ten minutes so nothing burns.

Once the granola has cooled for a few minutes, sprinkle the mini chocolate chips on top and gently stir to combine, letting the warm granola melt the chocolate.

Serve in a bowl with milk, on top of yogurt or just straight from the container.

This granola can be customized any way you like: add in raisins, chopped dried fruit, chia seeds, or even drizzle melted chocolate after the granola comes out of the oven.

Granola can be stored in an airtight container for several weeks.

