



GUIDE

Dates vs Figs: 3 Recipes Settled It (Nutrition + Price)

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By **Hassen Moumen** · Founder & Editor · Reviewed September 2026

The salad settled it, so let's start there.

Last month I bought a bag of dried Calimyrna figs from Trader Joe's and a bag of [Medjool](#), and ran both through the same three recipes to stop guessing which one belonged where. Recipe one: arugula, goat cheese, toasted walnuts, and halved fruit over the top.

The fig halves held. Chewy, honeyed, one clean bite each – they sat on the leaves like they were designed for it. The Medjool halves slowly relaxed into the warm shallot dressing, shed sticky sweetness onto the goat cheese, and turned the top of the salad into a slight mess. Still tasty. But the figs won that plate without a debate, and the rest of the experiment mapped out exactly where else each fruit wins.

QUICK ANSWER

Dates and figs both bring sweetness and fiber, but higher sugar per ounce, while figs add more crunch texture and recipe.

What you're actually comparing

Quick biology, because it explains the behavior in the kitchen: a date is the fruit of a palm – dense flesh around a single pit, basically a sugar battery. A fig is an inverted flower – the whole fruit is a hollow bloom turned inside out, dotted with hundreds of tiny seeds, which is where that distinctive crunch comes from. They're not cousins that look alike; they're different plants that landed in the same snack drawer.

And one fork in the road before the numbers: fresh figs are a different product. A fresh fig is ~74 kcal per 100 g, delicate, and travels badly – if you've only met figs dried, that's normal, because dried is what survives shipping. Dried figs vs dates is the honest comparison, and it's the one below.

The numbers that matter

Per 100 g, dried fruit, from the [USDA food database](#):

Per 100 g, dried	Medjool dates	Deglet Noor	Dried figs
Calories	277	282	249
Fiber	6.7 g	8.0 g	9.8 g
Sugar	66 g	63 g	48 g
Calcium	64 mg	39 mg	162 mg
Potassium	696 mg	656 mg	680 mg

Per 100 g, dried	Medjool dates	Deglet Noor	Dried figs
Price per oz (my area, late 2025)	\$0.45	\$0.25	\$0.55

Three rows tell the story. Figs win fiber and calcium – that calcium number isn't close, and it's why dried figs show up in every "bone health" conversation about dried fruit, including [Harvard's Nutrition Source coverage](#). Dates win sugar – 66 g vs 48 g per 100 g is why they bind energy balls, sweeten sauces, and generally behave like caramel you can chew. Dates win price – about 20% cheaper per ounce than figs in my basket, and fig servings disappear faster because one fig is one bite.

If you want to compare the two date varieties side by side, our [Deglet Noor](#) page covers the cheaper side.

Recipe two: energy balls

Oats, peanut butter, chopped fruit, no binder. Rolled into balls.

Dates: bound perfectly, as expected – date flesh is the binder. Figs: stayed as chewy chips, and the balls cracked apart in the container by morning. My keeper version is a 70/30 dates-to-figs mix: dates do the binding, figs leave little chewy seed-speckled pockets in every bite. Genuinely better than all-date. Small discovery, big repeat value.

Full method and ratios live in our [best dates for baking guide](#), and the baseline version is in our [date energy balls recipe](#).

Recipe three: quick compote over vanilla ice cream

Ten minutes, fruit + splash of water + cinnamon, split into two pans.

The date pan melted into an actual caramel sauce – glossy, pourable, the fruit essentially dissolved. The fig pan stayed chunky: soft pieces in a thin syrup, seeds intact. These weren't the same dessert. The date version is a sauce; the fig version is a fruit topping. Split verdict by design: if you want caramel, no fig will ever get you there; if you want texture, a date will melt into disappointment. I froze both in jars and have eaten more ice cream this month than the last year combined.

The scoreboard

Use	Winner	Why
Cheese boards, salads	Figs	Hold shape, chewy bite, seeds add texture
Binding (energy balls, no-bake)	Dates	Sugar + flesh = the glue
Caramel sauces, sweetening	Dates	66 g sugar/100 g does the work
Calcium & fiber per bite	Figs	162 mg calcium, 9.8 g fiber
Budget snacking	Dates (esp. Deglet Noor)	~\$0.25/oz vs \$0.55
Eating plain by preference	You	My wife votes figs. My vote changes weekly.

If the scoreboard ends at "both," stuffed dates with a fig-and-date mix stuffed with goat cheese is my party trick – see our [stuffed dates recipe](#).

Frequently asked questions

Can I substitute figs for dates in desserts?

By weight, for chopped fruit – yes, 1:1, and fig bread with chopped dates is a very good bread. For anything needing a puree or paste – no. Figs won't break down into the caramel binder dates become; your energy balls and bars will crumble. My rule: swap for chunks, never for glue.

Which is better for diabetics?

Wrong question, and I say that with numbers: one Medjool carries roughly 16 g of sugar; one dried fig, about 4-5 g. Per piece, figs are lighter – but nobody eats one fig. Both fruits are concentrated sugar and neither earns a health halo. What actually matters: count the pieces, pair them with nuts or cheese to slow the hit, and make the call with your doctor, not with a blog – including this one.

Are fresh figs comparable to dates?

Different food entirely – 74 kcal/100 g, fragile, seasonal, nothing like the dried version. Buy fresh figs in season and eat them within days; don't compare them to dates, because they'll lose on storage and win on everything else.

Want the date side narrowed to your budget and use?

The Finder sorts by purpose, texture, sweetness, and price per ounce in about a minute.

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