

## Southern Alps Slow Fruit (Vegan, Gluten-Free, Soy-Free)

Hannah Terry-Whyte, Fit Fare ~ When the opportunity arose to sample a selection of Southern Alps Slow Fruit, I jumped at the chance. In the past, I have tended to shy away from dried fruit because it is so often loaded with additives, preservatives, and sugar, which not only decrease the healthfulness of the snack but, in my experience, have a detrimental effect on the flavor. To my delight, Southern Alps's technique of slow-drying makes additives unnecessary and, more importantly, retains the natural goodness of the fruit and its flavor. Southern Alps is promoting its Fruit Mixes, and in particular, its No. 25 Slow Fruit Gift Box, as "healthy decadence" fit for a Mother's Day present. While I have not tasted every fruit in the line-up, I can nevertheless say I'd be pleased to give my mother any of Southern Alps's sweet and tangy treats. However, seeing as said mother lives a good nineteen hour plane flight away, I think I'll just enjoy them myself for the time being.

I was sent two packets each of the No. 7 Slow Fruit Mix, which is comprised of "slow mango, slow apples, slow pineapple, slow strawberries," and the No. 17, which is "slow white mulberries." Having never had mulberries before, and being intrigued by the website's description of them as tasting like "small drops of honey," I tried these first. To my surprise, the white mulberries do taste like concentrated jolts of honey, but not the one-dimensional mass produced honey you find in the supermarket. No, these have a depth of flavor to them that is hard to pin down; the best I can say is that these dried white mulberries have a complex, almost dark, layered sweetness. In fact, I think these could very well vie with dates for the title of "nature's candy." I was also surprised by how dense each little berry was; when I saw that the 1.4oz packet was listed as two servings, I chuckled to myself. However, after tasting them, I believe a few could satisfy a sugar craving (although I should admit that I ate them in one go quite happily). I can imagine these being delicious on a cheese platter, or with a good quality dark chocolate.

Being very pleased with the mulberries, I moved onto the No. 17, and found myself enjoying the fruits in this mix even more. While the sweetness of the mulberries is lovely, I am particularly enamored with the tangy-ness of the fruits in the Slow Fruit Mix (which is, of course, due to the natural flavors of the fruits; as I've mentioned, there is no added sugar in any Southern Alps's Slow Fruit). Each "slow" fruit piece seemed to have had its pure fruit flavor distilled; the fruit tasted so strongly of itself that I again found myself wondering why, particularly with strawberries and mangos, some companies feel the need to add sugar to dried fruit. The apples tasted far better than the spongy dried specimens found at supermarkets, the strawberries were wonderfully tangy and the mango made me feel a bit naughty for not having sent them to my mother. She loves fresh mango and, I'm sure, would love these. My personal favorite, however, were the pineapple pieces. Chewy, sweet and tangy, I can see myself picking up a packet of these in the future. Oh, but I also want to try the yellow figs, and the nectarines, and the muesli mixes look really good too&hellip;

Photo courtesy of <http://www.southern-alps.co.uk>