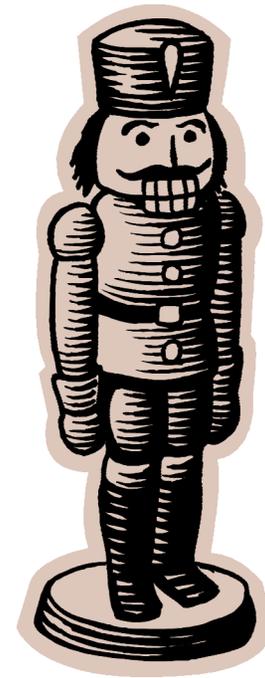


Notes:

THE NUTCRACKER SUITE

NUT BASICS, RECIPES, CRAFTS



BEDFORD FCE CLUBS
COUNTYWIDE MEETING

NOVEMBER 2008

Nuts

Nuts are any of various dry fruits that generally consist of an edible kernel enclosed in a shell. In culinary uses, any large, oily kernel found within a shell and used in food may be regarded as a nut. The term is applied to many seeds that are not botanically true nuts.

Because nuts generally have a high oil content, they are a highly prized food and energy source. They are eaten raw or roasted or pressed for oil like peanut oil and walnut oil.

Nuts are high in calcium, folic acid, magnesium, potassium, vitamin E and fiber. Although high in fat, it is mostly monounsaturated fat which helps to lower LDL (bad) cholesterol levels. Nuts are also a good source of protein in the diet.

Selection and Storage:

- For unshelled nuts, choose those that are heavy for their size and do not have cracks or holes in the shells.
- For shelled nuts, choose plump, crisp and uniform colored and sized nuts that are not shriveled or discolored. Packaged shelled nuts are harder to test for freshness. If they're in a cellophane bag, snap a couple through the wrapping. If they bend, rather than break crisply, the nuts are past their prime.
- Buy nuts in small amounts from a supplier with rapid turnover.
- Because of their high fat content, nuts will tend to turn rancid and will ruin the flavor of the dish. Always taste nuts before using them.
- Shelled nuts are best kept frozen, up to 8 months (or you can refrigerate for 4 months). Place the bag in another plastic bag with a zip top to further protect the nuts. Unshelled nuts generally will keep twice as long as shelled (depending on their freshness at the time of storage).

Shelling Nuts:

Place hard to crack nuts in a large saucepan and cover with water. Bring to a boil, then remove from the heat, cover and set aside for at least 15 minutes, or until cool. Blot the nuts dry, then crack them with a nutcracker.

- Freezing nuts can make shelling easier.
- To shell nuts so that the nutmeats are relatively intact, gently press on the middle of the shell with a nutcracker, rotating the nut three or four times as you do.
- To eliminate bits of shell in freshly hulled nuts, turn the nuts into a large bowl of cool water. The shells should float and can be skimmed off. Drain and dry the nuts thoroughly before using. You can toast them in the oven at 350 degrees F. to help dry them.

Preparation:

- Toasting nuts intensifies their flavor and adds crunch. Also, toasted nuts aren't as likely to sink in cakes, breads and other batter-based foods.
 - To skillet toast: Cook in an ungreased skillet over medium heat, stirring frequently, until golden brown. Remove from pan immediately to cool.
 - To oven toast: Spread nuts in a single layer on a baking sheet. Bake at 350 degrees, stirring occasionally, for 10-15 minutes (check at 5 minutes and every couple of minutes after).
- Nuts are easier to chop when they're warm. So chop while cooling from toasting or heat in microwave for 2-3 minutes on high or in an oven at 350 degrees for 5 minutes.
- When chopping nuts in a food processor use 1 cup or less and use quick on/off pulses. Don't overprocess or you'll end up with nut butter. It is best to chop them by hand.
- To sugar nuts, pour a layer of white sugar in the bottom of a frying pan and place over medium heat until sugar melts. Add warm or room temperature nuts and stir quickly to coat. Place on parchment paper or silicone mat (silpat) to cool. Break into pieces when cool. Store in airtight container for a week or so.

Uses:

- **Appetizers**
 - Add mixed nuts to party mix or trail mix
 - Make spiced nuts or sugared nuts
 - Roll cheese balls in chopped pecans or walnuts using the pecans for milder balls and walnuts for stronger flavored cheese balls or ones with fruit in them
 - Use pecan halves to garnish cheese wafers—press into top before baking
- **Salads**
 - Sprinkle toasted or sugared pecans over salad of romaine lettuce, pears and blue cheese with balsamic vinaigrette dressing
 - Sprinkle toasted pine nuts in a Mediterranean salad of romaine lettuce, tomatoes, black olives, red onion and croutons with Italian dressing
 - Sprinkle sugared almonds over a salad of romaine lettuce, green onions, celery and mandarin oranges with Blush Wine Vinaigrette dressing
 - Fold nuts into gelatin salads after they have partially set up to prevent floating
- **Main Dishes**
 - Use Virginia peanuts or cashews in stir fries adding them last
 - Add toasted pecans or almonds to chicken salad for added crunch
 - Add chopped nuts (pecans, walnuts, hazelnuts, macadamia nuts, peanuts) to breadcrumbs when coating chicken strips or fish before pan frying or baking
- **Vegetables and Sides**
 - Brown almonds or cashews in butter in a frying pan and sprinkle with salt before tossing with green beans
 - Add toasted almonds to rice pilaf for added crunch
- **Baked Goods**
 - Coat nuts and other chunkies with flour mixture before adding to batters to prevent sinking or floating
 - Add 1/2-1 cup chopped nuts to cookie dough, brownie mix, muffin batter, cake batter, scones, etc.
 - Use pecan or walnut halves to garnish cake tops

Peanut Brittle

- 2 cups sugar
- 1 cup light corn syrup
- 1/2 cup water
- 1 cup butter
- 4 cups raw peanuts
- 2 teaspoons baking soda

Combine sugar, syrup, water and butter in a large heavy bottomed pot. Clip a candy thermometer on the side of the pan with the tip in the mixture but off the bottom. Cook on medium heat until candy thermometer reaches soft ball stage (238-240 degrees). Add peanuts (which have been heated in microwave for 4 minutes). Cook until thermometer reaches 302 degrees. Add baking soda and stir (it will foam up so be careful). Pour onto buttered baking sheets or silpat. Let cool slightly and then with a spatula or your fingers, being careful not to burn yourself, pull and stretch the cooling candy until sugar part is thin between the peanuts. Let cool completely and break into pieces. Store in an airtight container.

Nut Turkeys

Supplies:

- 1-1/2 inch wooden heart (1/8 inch thick)
- orange chenille stem, cut
- whole walnut in shell
- hazelnut (filbert) in shell
- silk Fall leaf
- 3mm bead eyes
- scraps of yellow and red felt



Cut the chenille stem just so it will make a 'U' around the nut and folding about 3/8 inch of each end to form two toes for the feet. Glue the shaped chenille to the heart with the feet in the two humps and the U in the point. Hot glue the walnut to the heart on top of the chenille, with the pointed ends of each going the same way (this is the tail of the turkey). Glue the hazelnut on top for the head with the light part as the face. Hot glue the beads to the face for eyes. Cut a wattle and beak as shown in the picture from the felt and glue in place. Glue the leaf on the back for the tail.

White Chocolate Cherry Chunkies

- 1/2 cup butter, softened
- 1 cup packed brown sugar
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons milk
- 1 cup chopped macadamia nuts
- 1 cup candied cherries, coarsely chopped
- 1 1/2 cups white chocolate chips or chunks

In a medium bowl, with electric mixer, cream butter and sugars together until light and fluffy. Add eggs and vanilla and beat until just combined. Set aside. Sift together flour, soda and salt. Add milk to the butter mixture and then add the flour mixture. Mix until just combined. Batter should be stiff. In another bowl, combine nuts, cherries and white chocolate. Then add to batter, stirring only to blend. Drop by heaping tablespoons onto a greased cookie sheet, 2 inches apart. Bake at 375 degrees for 11-13 minutes. Cool on a wire rack.

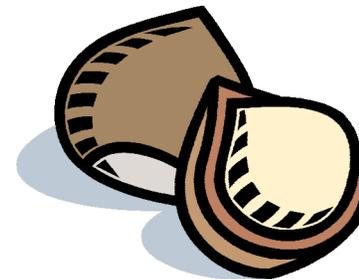
New Orleans Pralines

- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 3/4 cup light brown sugar
- 1/2 cup milk
- 6 tablespoons butter
- 1 1/2 cups pecans
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Combine all ingredients and bring to a softball stage, 238-240 degrees (bring to a rolling boil over high heat, then reduce to medium heat and cook for 3 minutes), stirring constantly. Remove from heat. Stir until mixture thickens slightly, becomes creamy and cloudy, and pecans stay suspended in mixture. Immediately spoon out onto buttered waxed paper, aluminum foil or parchment paper. When using waxed paper, be sure to buffer with newspaper underneath as hot wax will transfer to whatever is beneath.

Nut Yields

Nut	1 Pound In Shell	1 Pound Shelled
Almonds	1 1/2 – 2 cups	3 – 3 1/2 cups whole 4 cups slivered
Brazil Nuts		3 cups
Chestnuts	2 1/2 cups shelled	Makes 1 cup purée
Hazelnuts (Filberts)	1 1/2 cups	3 1/2 cups whole
Peanuts	3 cups shelled	
Pecans	3 cups shelled	4 cups halves 3 3/4 cups chopped
Pistachio Nuts	2 cups shelled	3 1/2 – 4 cups
Walnuts	2 cups nuts	3 3/4 cups halves 3 1/2 cups chopped



<p>Almonds</p>	<p>Almonds are the kernels of the almond tree fruit.</p> <p>Sweet almonds are what we get in the stores. Bitter almonds contain a trace of poisonous prussic acid, even though practically all of the acid is destroyed by the roasting heat.</p> <p>Almond Paste:</p> <p>Almond paste cannot be made at home because it contains the oil of the bitter almonds. Commercial processing neutralizes the prussic acid. The FDA prohibits the importation or sale of bitter almonds to consumers. Marzipan is almond paste with added sugar and is often made with added</p>
<p>Brazil Nuts</p>	<p>Brazil nuts are actually the seed of a giant tree that grows in the Amazon.</p> <p>Their shells are extraordinarily hard so freeze or boil and use a heavy-duty nutcracker or hammer to crack the shell.</p>
<p>Cashews</p>	<p>Cashews are sold shelled and toasted. They are encased in a double shell that is separated by a toxic oil (prussic acid) that must be burned off.</p> <p>Cashews are best used in quick cooking like stir frying as prolonged heating or baking will over-soften them.</p>
<p>Chestnuts</p>	<p>Chestnuts are in season from September to February.</p> <p>They are very perishable due to their moisture content so store in the refrigerator for 2 weeks or freeze for 4 months.</p> <p>They have a dark, leathery shell and a brown skin, both of which must be removed before eating (the skin usually comes off with the shell).</p> <p>Chestnuts can be shelled and then cooked or cooked and then shelled.</p> <p>To shell and/or cook, use the point of a paring knife to slash an X on the flat side of each nut, being sure to cut through the skin. Peel the chestnuts while they are still warm using one of the following methods:</p> <p>For stovetop, cover with water, bring to boil, cook for 4 minutes, remove from heat and peel. To cook until tender, cover and simmer 20-30 minutes.</p> <p>For oven, bake in single layer at 425 degrees for 10-15 minutes. To roast until tender, bake for 15-25 minutes, stirring occasionally.</p>

Kung Pao Chicken

- 1 egg white
- 2 teaspoons cornstarch
- 3/4 pound boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut into 1/2" pieces
- 2 tablespoons brown bean sauce
- 1 tablespoon hoisin sauce
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 2 teaspoons sherry
- 1 tablespoon rice wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons water
- 2 tablespoons peanut oil
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper
- 1/2 cup cocktail peanuts
- White rice, cooked (medium grain preferred)

In bowl, whisk egg white and cornstarch together. Add chicken and set aside. In another small bowl combine the brown bean sauce, hoisin sauce, sugar, sherry, rice wine vinegar and water. In wok, heat peanut oil to smoking point. Add chicken. Cook and stir until no longer pink inside. Remove chicken to serving bowl. Drain off all but a tablespoon of oil from wok and heat. Add garlic and red pepper for a second. Return chicken and add sauce and peanuts. Cook for a minute until heated. Serve over rice.

Almond Coffee Cake

- 3/4 cup butter, melted
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 1/2 cups flour
- 1 pinch salt
- 1 teaspoon almond extract
- 1/3 cup slivered almonds
- 1 1/2 teaspoons coarse sugar

Line a 10" iron skillet with aluminum foil. In mixing bowl, combine butter and 1 1/2 cups sugar. Add eggs one at a time. Add the flour, salt and almond extract. Mix well and pour into prepared skillet. Sprinkle with almonds and 1 1/2 teaspoons coarse sugar. Bake at 350 degrees for 30-40 minutes or until golden brown. Let cool 1 hour.

Green Salad with Blue Cheese, Cherries and Balsamic Dressing

- 1 tablespoon Dijon style mustard
- 1/4 cup balsamic vinegar
- 1/4 cup rice wine vinegar
- 3/4 cup vegetable oil
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/4 cup maple syrup
- 1 head red leaf lettuce
- 1 head Bibb lettuce or Boston lettuce
- 1 1/3 cups dried red cherries (about 6 ounces)
- 8 ounces blue cheese, crumbled
- 10 ounces thin sliced bacon, cooked and crumbled
- 1 cup toasted pine nuts

For the dressing: Whisk together the mustard and vinegars. Slowly whisk in the vegetable oil. Stir in the basil, pepper, salt and maple syrup. When ready to serve, tear salad greens into bite-size pieces and toss with enough dressing to coat. Top with cherries, blue cheese, crumbled bacon and pine nuts.

Honey Mustard Pasta Salad with Chicken and Cashews

- 1/4 cup mustard
- 1/4 cup honey
- 1/4 cup mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon Dijon style mustard
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon white peppers
- 1 clove garlic, finely minced
- 4 cups bow tie pasta, cooked
- 2 cups chicken breasts, cooked and chopped
- 2 green bell peppers coarsely chopped
- 2 stalks celery, chopped
- 8 green onions, sliced
- 1 cup cashew nuts, toasted

In a large bowl, whisk together mustard, honey, mayonnaise, Dijon mustard, salt, pepper and garlic. Stir in pasta, chicken, bell peppers, celery and onions until evenly coated. Refrigerate 1-2 hours to blend flavors. Stir in half of the cashews. Sprinkle remaining cashews over the top.

Hazelnuts (Filberts)	<p>Hazelnuts grow wild, filberts are cultivated. Hazelnuts are the smaller of the two. The names are often used interchangeably.</p> <p>Hazelnuts are used often in Italian cooking.</p> <p>Hazelnuts have a bitter brown skin that should be removed by soaking in cold water for 1 minute. Drain but don't dry and bake at 400 degrees for 5-7 minutes or until the skins begin to flake. Place a handful of the warm nuts on a kitchen towel, then fold the towel over the nuts and rub vigorously to remove most of the skins.</p>
Macademia Nuts	<p>Originally from Australia, macadamias are now mainly cultivated in Hawaii.</p> <p>They are buttery, rich, high in fat and have a hint of sweetness.</p> <p>They are usually sold shelled and roasted.</p>
Peanuts	<p>Peanuts are actually a legume (like beans) and grow underground. They are sometimes called groundnuts or goober peas.</p> <p>Although there are several varieties, the two most popular are the small, round Spanish peanut and the larger, more oval Virginia peanut.</p>
Pecans	<p>The pecan is a native American nut from the hickory family.</p> <p>It contains more fat than any other nut with about 70%.</p>
Pine Nuts	<p>Pine nuts are the oval, small, sweet nut from pine trees.</p> <p>European (pignole) are long, narrow, delicate and expensive.</p> <p>Chinese (pine kernels) are shorter, more oval in shape, darker and stronger flavored. This is usually what we get in the stores.</p>
Pistachio Nuts	<p>California grows 98% of the American-grown pistachios.</p> <p>The shells are naturally tan but when first imported from the Middle East they were always dyed red. Now, some are still dyed red because of their familiarity.</p> <p>The nut is immature and flavorless if the shell is not split open.</p>
Walnuts	<p>The walnut is the fruit of the walnut tree.</p> <p>The two most popular varieties are the English walnut and the black walnut. Less common white walnuts are known as the butternut.</p>

Spicy Mixed Nuts

- 1/4 cup butter, melted
- 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon celery salt
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon seasoned salt
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 3 cups mixed nuts

In a medium size bowl, combine butter, Worcestershire sauce, celery salt, garlic powder, cumin, seasoned salt and cayenne. Stir in the nuts. Spread mixture onto a jellyroll pan. Bake for 15 to 20 minutes at 325 degrees, stirring twice. Spread on foil to cool. Store in an airtight container for up to 2 weeks. Makes 3 cups.

Cinnamon Sugar Honey Almonds

- 2 cups whole almonds, toasted
- 1/4 cup honey
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/4 cup turbinado sugar (sugar in the raw)

Place honey, butter and cinnamon in a sauce pan on low heat until butter is melted. Increase heat to medium and stir together until blended and bring to a boil. Stir constantly for two minutes. Add almonds to the pan and stir to coat evenly for an additional two minutes on medium heat. Line a cookie sheet with parchment paper and sprinkle half of the turbinado sugar on the parchment paper. Remove nuts from heat and drop almonds on parchment paper to stick to sugar. Sprinkle remaining sugar on top. Stir to completely coat. Allow to cool and break apart clumps. Store in an airtight container or ziplock bag.

Rosemary Pecans

- 2 tablespoons melted butter
- 1 1/2 teaspoons dried rosemary crumbled
- 1 1/2 teaspoons salt
- 1/4 - 1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper or paprika
- 2 cups pecans

Stir together the butter, rosemary, salt and cayenne. Add pecans and stir well to coat. Bake at 350 degrees for 10-15 minutes.

Classic Basil Pesto

- 2 cloves garlic, peeled
- 3 tablespoons pine nuts
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 3 ounces stemmed sweet basil leaves (about 3 cups gently packed)
- 1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1/2 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese

In a food processor, finely grind the garlic, pine nuts and salt, about 15 seconds. Add the basil leaves and process in spurts just until no whole leaves remain. With the machine running, pour the oil through the feed tube in a steady stream. Stop and scrape down the sides, then process for several more seconds. The mixture should be ground to a paste-like consistency but a little bit of the leaves' texture should remain. If necessary, quickly pulse the mixture again. Add the cheese and pulse until just incorporated.

Nutty Cheese Rolls

- 2/3 cup finely chopped walnuts
- 1/3 cup crumbled blue cheese, grated parmesan cheese or shredded gruyere cheese
- 1 tablespoon finely snipped fresh parsley
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 refrigerated unbaked pie crust (1/2 of a 15 oz. package)
- 1 tablespoon milk
- 2 teaspoons grated parmesan cheese
- Finely snipped fresh parsley for garnish

Stir together walnuts, cheese, 1 tablespoon parsley and the pepper in a medium bowl. Unfold piecrust on a lightly floured surface according to package directions. Spread filling evenly over the crust. Cut the pastry circle into 12 wedges. Starting at the wide ends, loosely roll up wedges. Place rolls, tip side down, on a greased baking sheet. (To make ahead, cover and chill rolls for up to 24 hours.) Brush rolls lightly with milk before baking. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese and additional parsley. Bake at 425 degrees for about 15 minutes or until golden. Cool slightly on a wire rack. Serve warm.