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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Tuesday, November 21, 1944

QUESTION BOX

- 9 1. How roast nuts?
2. How vaccum pack nuts?
- 3/HH 3. How make nut butter?

ANSWERS from food specialists of the
U.S. Department of Agriculture

5 November always brings questions on nuts. Ways to use them. Methods of keeping them fresh and tasty. Seems we have more questions than usual this year. Maybe that's because the nut crops are so abundant. Pecans, almonds, walnuts - looks like there'll be plenty on hand for roasting, for our holiday fruit cakes and homemade candies.

First question comes from a homemaker who wants to roast and salt some nuts. She asks if there's enough natural oil in the nuts for this, or should she add some oil when she roasts the nuts. Food specialists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture say you should add oil or other fat. You can get along very well with just about two teaspoons of fat and a teaspoon of salt to each cup of nuts. Of course, deep fat is best to develop the nut flavor.

And here are some other suggestions for those of who plan to roast and salt nuts at home. If you're roasting almonds, you'll need to blanch them first. Blanching of course, just means removing the skin. You can blanch almonds by pouring boiling water on the nut meats and allowing them to simmer for about three minutes. When you take the almonds out of the water, the skins will slip off easily. Just press them between your thumb and forefinger. Spread the blanched almonds on a piece of absorbent paper and leave them overnight. They'll dry at ordinary room temperature. You don't need to blanch the tender-skinned nuts before you roast them - the pecans, walnuts, or hickory nuts.

As I said while ago, you'll get good results in roasted nuts if you use two teaspoons of table fat or cooking oil to each cup of nut kernels. Select good nut meats and be sure all the little pieces of shell are removed. Then spread the nut kernels in a single layer in the pan and pour the oil over them.

You may roast the nuts in the frying pan on top of the stove, or you may wish to roast them in a moderately hot oven. Whichever method you use, spread them in a single layer in the pan and then stir them occasionally.

Another thing you'll have to watch is overcooking. Some of the nutmeats will darken after you remove them from the heat. They'll become more crisp as they cool. This is particularly true of pecans. So don't overcook them. Just let them heat through. It takes a little longer to roast blanched almonds or raw peanuts. From 15 to 30 minutes to heat them until they're a light brown in color.

When the nuts are roasted, spread them out on absorbent paper to drain the oil. Then sprinkle them with salt.

Now our next question is from a homemaker who wishes to vacuum pack some nuts. These are fresh nuts - not salted. She asks if it's possible to do this at home. Yes, the food specialists say it is. Use half-pint or pint jars. And prepare a boiling water bath. How much water will you need for this? Well, the water should come up about 2 inches on the sides of the jar. And of course you'll want to have plenty of room to handle the jars. So they won't be crowded. After you get your nuts shelled and ready, then sterilize the jars. But let them dry before you pack the nuts in them. When you've filled the jars with nuts, seal them partially, as you do when you're canning. Then put the jars in the boiling water bath and keep them there for about 30 minutes. Be sure the water's boiling all this time. Then take the jars out and complete the sealing. Let your vacuum packed nuts cool before you store them in a cool, dark place.

Our final question in today's Chat comes from a homemaker who wants to know if it's possible to make nut butter. She says, "Instead of peanuts could I

substitute some other nut for nut butter?"

And the food specialists say yes to this question too. You may substitute other nuts. Almonds and cashew nuts make very good butter. As you probably know, nut butter is made of nuts that have been run through the food grinder two or three times. Use the finest knife or plate of the grinder so the butter will be smooth. Then add vegetable oil - a bland table oil- and salt. That's all there is to it. You'll need a tablespoon of oil and a half a teaspoon of salt to two cups of blanched and roasted almonds. And this will make about a half a pound of butter.

Another spread you can make of ground almonds is an almond paste. For this, use almonds that have been blanched but not roasted. You run them through the grinder and then cook them with sugar, salt and water. I'll give you the ingredients for almond paste made with a cup and a half of ground almonds. Have a pencil ready? All right, here they are. A cup and a half of ground, blanched almonds. Three-fourths cup of sugar. Half a teaspoon of salt. A fourth a cup of water. And if you wish a little stronger almond flavor, add four drops of almond extract. Did you get those ingredients? Cup and a half of almonds. Three-fourths cup of sugar. Half a teaspoon salt. Fourth a cup of water, and four drops of almond extract. And remember for this, blanch your almonds but don't roast them. Then grind them through the finest knife on your chopper. Use your double foiler. Combine the indredients, the ground almonds, sugar, water and salt and cook in the covered double boiler for 20 minutes. Stir the paste to a nice thick creamy mixture while it cools. Then pack it in a covered container. Keep it in your refrigerator or some cool place. Use the almond paste to make macaroons, marzipan and other candies. And use it for frostings and fillings.

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