

GO NUTS THIS FALL!
Tree nuts add flavor and interest to your favorite dishes.

An important element of many of the world's cuisines for centuries, tree nuts—almonds, Brazils, cashews, hazelnuts, macadamias, pecans, pine nuts, pistachios and walnuts—offer an array of delicious flavors and textures that work well with a variety of dishes, or on their own as a snack.

Tree nuts contain important nutrients like fiber, vitamins such as niacin, folic acid and vitamins E and B6, and minerals such as magnesium, potassium, phosphorus, selenium and zinc. They can serve as an important source of protein too. And, tree nuts provide a number of important phytochemicals, or plant compounds, that may help protect against heart disease, cancer and other chronic diseases.

While nuts are relatively high in fat, it is primarily unsaturated. More than 40 studies have shown that including nuts in the diet can reduce the risk of heart disease. As a result, the Food and Drug Administration approved one of the first qualified health claims for nuts and heart disease: “Scientific evidence suggests but does not prove that eating 1.5 ounces per day of most nuts as part of a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol may reduce the risk of heart disease.”

As with most foods, portion control is important. “Nuts tend to be filling, so a single 1½-ounce serving is quite satisfying and can help with weight control,” states Maureen Ternus, M.S., R.D., registered dietitian and Nutrition Coordinator for the International Tree Nut Council Nutrition Research & Education Foundation. “Since tree nuts have such rich and complex flavors, they can be enjoyed as a snack or throughout the day in main dishes or sprinkled on yogurt, salads, soups or pasta.”

So if you're entertaining, or want to give a new twist to a favorite dish, add some mixed tree nuts to the menu for a taste that everyone will enjoy. Our ***Creamed Butternut, Pear and Nut Soup*** is a delicious starter before the main course or as a meal in itself. Adding nuts to this and many other soups provides a wonderful richness and texture as well as nutritional benefits. It's the perfect soup for a brisk fall day.

Try our delicious and simple to make ***Mushroom, Watercress and Ricotta Tarts with Nut Pastry*** and you'll no longer want to head to the freezer for packaged pastry! These tarts are the ideal snack, appetizer or entree and are great filled with just about anything—try shrimp, cooked chicken, asparagus, tomatoes or your favorite vegetables and herbs.

CREAMED BUTTERNUT, PEAR AND NUT SOUP

This flavorful soup is perfect as the first course or as a meal in itself. Nuts add richness, texture and a wonderful flavor.

1 tablespoon olive oil or nut oil
1 clove garlic, crushed
1/2 cup tree nuts, roughly chopped (such as macadamias, almonds, cashews and pecans)
1 leek, white part only, sliced
4 cups diced, peeled butternut squash
1 Bartlett or preferred pear, peeled and chopped
3½-4 cups chicken broth
Freshly ground black pepper
Plain yogurt or Crème Fraiche, for garnish
Toasted nuts for garnish, optional

Heat oil in a heavy based pan; add the garlic, tree nuts and leek, and sauté for 2-3 minutes or until golden brown. Add the squash and pear and cook, stirring, for 2-3 minutes. Pour the stock into the pan, cover and simmer for 20 minutes or until squash is soft. Transfer mixture to a blender and process until smooth and creamy, season to taste. Spoon into large bowls with a dollop of plain yogurt or Crème Fraiche and a few toasted nuts tossed over for garnish.

Makes 4 servings

Per serving: 230 calories, 13g fat, 9g monounsaturated fat, 2.5g polyunsaturated fat, 1.5g saturated fat, 27g carbohydrate, 6g protein, 6g fiber, 270% DV of vitamin A, 35% DV of vitamin C and 10% DV of iron.

MUSHROOM, WATERCRESS AND RICOTTA TARTS WITH NUT PASTRY

These tarts can be filled with shrimp, chicken, asparagus, tomatoes or your favorite vegetables and herbs.

Nut pastry

1/2 cup tree nuts (try pine nuts, hazelnuts, walnuts or pistachios)
1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil or nut oil
1/2 cup chilled skim milk

Filling

1 cup sliced mixed mushrooms
1 cup fresh ricotta cheese
1/2 bunch watercress
Freshly ground pepper to taste

Place nuts and flour in a food processor and process just to combine. Using the pulse switch, gradually add the oil and then the skim milk, pulsing on and off just until mixture comes together. Transfer to a floured board and knead gently to a smooth dough. Wrap in plastic and refrigerate 30 minutes.

Preheat oven to 350°F. Roll out pastry on a sheet of baking paper as thinly as possible. Cut into 6 square pieces and brush along each edge with water. Fold in the edges of each square to form a rim, pinching the edges to seal. Place on a lightly greased baking tray and pierce the bases with a fork. Bake for 10 minutes or until just pale golden. Allow to cool on a wire rack. These can be made a day or two ahead of time.

Place the mushrooms in a nonstick pan and heat gently just until they start to soften. Transfer to a paper towel and squeeze out excess moisture. Spread tart bases with ricotta cheese and season to taste with pepper. Arrange mushrooms over the top. Bake for 10 minutes or until ricotta is firm. Serve hot or cold with watercress scattered over the top.

Makes 6 individual tarts

Per serving: 470 calories, 25g fat, 15g monounsaturated fat, 4g polyunsaturated fat, 6g saturated fat, 46g carbohydrate, 18g protein, 4g fiber, 20% DV of calcium and 20% DV of iron.

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