

# Get

# cooking

## Nourishing, Nutritious, Natural and Nice - Christmas nut cases



There aren't enough superlatives to describe nuts! Versatile, flavoursome and brimming with healthy nutrients, they have a whole lot more going for them than people realise. The VVF is unashamed in its love of all things nutty so our cookery pages, devoted to the less glam veggie foods, is proud to put nuts in the limelight! But first some facts.

Nuts are dry, hard-shelled fruits that need, of course, to be cracked open - Christmas wouldn't be Christmas without losing the nut crackers. Almonds, brazils, chestnuts, pecans, pistachios, hazlenuts and walnuts are all classed as tree nuts - because they grow on trees. Doh! Peanuts are not nuts at all but legumes (pulses) - the dried seeds of plants that also include beans, peas and lentils.

The word 'nut' comes from the Latin nux or nutriens meaning 'to nourish'. And wow do they nourish! Nuts simply shout goodness - rich in good omega-6 and omega-3 fats, disease-busting antioxidant vitamins A, E and beta-carotene, protein and fibre, folic acid and minerals including selenium, magnesium and zinc. Walnuts are especially rich in omega-3, almonds are full of calcium and brazils are a great source of selenium. Nuts help protect against heart disease and some cancers.

Shelled or unshelled, salted or unsalted, raw or roasted - they all taste great but the less processed they are, the better. Use this nutty season to root out your nutcrackers, open those little gems and develop the nutty habit.

## Nut-Stuffed Mushrooms

Serves 4

5 large flat mushrooms (1 per person plus 1 extra mushroom for the stuffing)

1 large onion

2 garlic cloves

2 tsp olive oil

60g mixed unsalted nuts (brazils/hazelnuts/almonds/walnuts)

1 tbsp vegan margarine

½ tsp dried thyme

½ tsp dried rosemary

1 tbsp chopped fresh herbs eg parsley, fennel, dill, chives salt and pepper to taste

1. Cut the stems from the mushrooms and finely dice these along with one whole mushroom.
2. Preheat the oven to 400°F/200°C/Gas Mark 6.
3. Finely dice the onion and crush the garlic cloves.
4. Place the onion and garlic in a saucepan with

the olive oil and sweat them in the oil until the onion is soft and beginning to brown. Add the chopped mushroom stalks and sweat the vegetables for a few more minutes.

5. Lightly toast the mixed nuts in a medium oven or grill and remove the skins.
6. Grind the mixed nuts fairly finely in a food processor or using a mortar and pestle and add to the pan along with the margarine, dried herbs, fresh herbs and salt and pepper to taste. Mix to combine.
7. Place the field mushrooms, stem side up, on a baking tray. Divide the mixture between the mushrooms and spread over the surface of each one.
8. Bake in the oven for 5-8 minutes or until the tops are beginning to brown and the mushrooms are just cooked. Serve 2-3 mushrooms on each plate along with a salad garnish.

Adapted from *Vegetarian Cooking Without by Barbara Cousins* - available from VVF, £9.99 (plus £2.00 p&p)

Photography:  
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## Savoury Nut Roast

Serves 6-8

1 onion  
 3 tbsp vegetable oil  
 2 small tomatoes  
 30g wholewheat flour  
 140ml water  
 1 tbsp soya sauce  
 115g hazlenuts  
 115g broken cashew nuts  
 85g wholewheat breadcrumbs  
 1 tsp dried mixed herbs  
 30g soya flour

1. Score the tomato skins, place in a cup and top with boiling hot water.
2. Chop the onion finely and sauté it in the oil until tender.
3. Preheat the oven to 350°F/180°C/Gas Mark 4.
4. Skin and chop the tomatoes and add them to the pan. Cook for 5 minutes.
5. Stir in the flour and slowly add the water, stirring constantly to avoid lumps. Remove from the heat.
6. Grind the hazlenuts and add them to the sauce together with all the other ingredients. Mix very thoroughly and place in a greased bread tin or pie dish.
7. Bake in a moderate oven for 45 minutes to 1 hour.
8. Serve with gravy and seasonal veggies.

Taken from *Easy Vegan Cooking* by Leah Leneman - available from VVF, £8.99 (plus £2.00 p&p)

## Maple, Date and Pecan Parcels

Makes 8

8 sheets of filo pastry (make sure sheets are no bigger than 30cm x 20cm (12" x 8"))

1 tsp mixed spice  
 4 tbsp icing sugar  
 100g pecans, chopped  
 100g dates, chopped  
 4 tbsp maple syrup  
 85g vegan margarine, melted

1. If the filo pastry is frozen allow it to defrost thoroughly before starting.
2. Preheat the oven to 400°F/200°C/Gas Mark 6.
3. Stir the mixed spice into the icing sugar.
4. Carefully separate one sheet of filo pastry and lay flat on to a work surface. Brush with melted margarine.
5. Sprinkle ½ tsp of the sugar mixture over half of the pastry lengthways.
6. Sprinkle 12g of the pecans on top of the sugar.
7. Fold the plain side of the pastry over the side with the filling on and press around the edges.
8. Place 12g of the dates on top and drizzle with ½ tsp of maple syrup.
9. Fold the bottom left corner up to the opposite edge to form a triangle. Then keep folding the triangle over and over down the pastry until you reach the end of the pastry.
10. Repeat steps 4 to 9 until you have 8 parcels.
11. Place the parcels onto a greased baking tray and brush the top with melted margarine.
12. Cook on the top shelf of the oven for 10 minutes or until golden brown.
13. Other combinations of fruits and nuts which work well are cherry and walnut and almond and apricot.

Taken from *Martin Shaw Cooks Veggie* - available from VVF, £1.00 (plus 50p p&p)

