



December is a month of giving and entertaining. Nuts are a favorite addition to cheese platters or just in a decorative bowl on an end table for people to nibble. Flavored nuts are even more fun. They are deeeelicious and make good gifts.

Something other than the yearly plate of cookies might be fun to give to your loved ones this year. You can put them in canning jars with a ribbon of raffia, put them in a little take-out style box, or put them in a holiday tin. For a fancier gift, buy a nut bowl (the thrift stores are loaded with crystal dishes) and fill it with flavored nuts.

If you have a vacuum pack machine with attachments you can seal your canning jars. Check out this video! http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.edu/Master_Food_Preservers/Classes/

Here are a couple of our favorite recipes:

ROSEMARY CASHEWS

1 lb roasted unsalted cashews
2 Tblsp. minced fresh rosemary (pulverized works better)
½ tsp cayenne pepper
2 tsp light brown sugar
1 Tblsp. kosher salt
1 Tblsp. unsalted butter - melted

Heat oven to 350

Combine ingredients and toss with nuts.

Bake cashews at 350 on cookie sheet for 5-7 minutes.

Serve warm. Or, cool thoroughly before filling your canning jar or tin.

GINGER SPICED NUTS

2 tsp. five-spice
2 tsp. cinnamon

2 tsp. ginger
2 tsp. cumin
2 tsp. salt
1 tsp. chipotle chili powder
½ tsp. garlic powder

2 egg whites
6 cups unsalted nuts (cashews, almonds, pecans and/or walnuts)
¼ cup sugar
½ cup crystallized ginger, cut into matchsticks

Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper.
Combine spices in a bowl and stir to mix spices
Whisk egg whites until foamy, add spices
Add nuts
Toss with sugar
Spread nut mixture in single layer on parchment paper
Bake at 225 until dry, stir every 20 minutes, for about 1h 20 total

Remove from oven
Mix in crystallized ginger
As nuts cool, stir them occasional to keep them from sticking together.

CURRIED MIXED NUTS

When I dip into a bowl of nuts at a party and they turn out to be slightly hot; slightly sweet and slightly curried, I'm in heaven.

Here's what you need:

2 Tbsp. olive oil or vegetable oil.
½ tsp. ground ginger
½ tsp. curry powder
¼ tsp. cayenne pepper
2 Tbsp. sugar
1 Tbsp. honey
2 cups unsalted nuts that may include: walnut halves, cashew halves, pistachios, almonds, hazelnuts
Salt to taste

Here's what you do:

Line baking sheet parchment paper.
Heat 2 tablespoons oil in large nonstick skillet over medium heat.
Add spices and sauté until fragrant, about 5 seconds.
Stir in sugar and honey.
Add nuts. Stir until honey mixture is amber in color and nuts are well coated, about 6 minutes.

Transfer nut mixture to prepared baking sheet. Working quickly, separate nuts with spoon so they don't stick together. Sprinkle with salt. Cool. (Can be made 3 days ahead. Store in airtight container at room temperature.)

Makes 1 ½ cups.

SWEET-N-SPICY NUTS

5 lbs. of nuts fills 14-4x9" bags

Mixed unsalted nuts

Mild Jerk Seasoning – ¼ cup per lb of nuts). A local supermarket has a Carriibbean marinade that is great!

Brown Sugar – ¼ cup per lb of nuts)

Mix jerk seasoning and sugar in large bowl/kettle. Coat nuts. Bake in a single layer 300°, 30 mins, stirring every 10 mins. Cool, stirring frequently to prevent sticking.

