



Almonds

By Ora Emmerich

UCCE El Dorado County Master Food Preservers

Almonds bring a wonderful taste to many diverse recipes. From salads to smoothies and fish to fowl, this versatile nut complements the taste of almost any type of food. Anyone with access to an almond tree or two can enjoy home processing of these delicious nuts.

Harvested from August to late September, almonds usually need a little more drying time after the hulls have been removed. Many home orchard owners in California choose to dry the almonds on screens set outside to take advantage of the hot, dry weather. Care must be taken to keep birds and other animals from absconding with the harvest at this time, so many people cover the nuts with a screen or plastic netting. The University of Davis Extension reminds harvesters to “Check the nuts often for dryness. Remove shells from several nuts and break the kernels. Rubbery kernels indicate that additional drying is necessary. Almonds are ready for storage when the kernels are crisp to brittle when broken.”

Those without almond trees need only go as far as the neighborhood grocery store to find all types of almonds. This little nut, loaded with protein and certified by the American Heart Association as a Heart-Healthy food, comes in a variety of forms. The whole almond, great for snacking, can be found raw, blanched, smoked or flavored in many different ways. Home bakers know that slivered almonds often enhance baked goods, as can chopped or diced versions. The smaller almond pieces can be incorporated in stir-fry dishes or tossed into salads. How about using slivered or diced almonds for a coating on ice-cream bars? Yummy!

Almonds keep well. The University of Davis Extension offers the following guidelines for home storage of almonds: “When properly dried, in-shell almonds can be stored for eight months at room temperature (68°F) and for a year or more at 32°F to 45°F. Shelled almonds will retain quality for a year at 32°F and for a year or more at 0°F.” Freezing the nuts at 0°F for forty-eight hours will kill pests which may be present, and the nuts can then be stored as preferred. Almonds absorb odors easily, so be sure to store these nuts in air-tight containers away from strong-odor foods.

For questions about safe home food preservation, or to schedule a speaker for organizations or clubs on the topics of food safety or food preservation, call the Master Food Preservers at (530) 621-5506. For more information, be sure to go to the Master Food Preserver website at http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.org/Master_Food_Preservers/. Sign up to receive our Master Food Preservers E-Newsletter at <http://ucanr.org/mfpnews/>.