

GO NUTS



THE RUNDOWN

The truth about nuts is that they are full of monounsaturated fats, protein, fiber, trace minerals, vitamin E, and phenolic compounds. Where did that undeserved reputation as high-sodium, high-calorie, high-fat snacks come from? Source nuts consciously, and you'll have the power of a food that can help reduce cholesterol, high blood pressure, and inflammation.

Q & A

ARE YOU SURE I WON'T GAIN WEIGHT SNACKING ON NUTS?

Fat is a necessary part of your diet. It's generally sugar that causes excessive fat buildup in your body (especially in the tummy). Nuts are high in monounsaturated fats and very low in sugar (unless they've been coated in it, so read your nutrition labels). Your body processes nuts slowly so they're the perfect snack to help you feel satiated. If you're concerned about sodium, nuts are available without any additional processing; you can get raw and/or unsalted pistachios, macadamias, almonds, peanuts... the

list goes on. And they're delicious, so what's not to love?

NUTRITION NOTES

Nuts are full of the following, which is why we think they're so wonderful:

MONOUNSATURATED FATS

These particularly fabulous fats are found in nuts, seeds, and plant oils. They're physically defined as being liquid at room temperature. These types of fats can actually help your heart; they're protective against heart disease and help balance your cholesterol. Replacing saturated fats from animal sources (butter, cheese, fatty meats) with monounsaturated fats will put you on track to a healthier heart.

OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS

Another particularly beneficial type of fat, Omega-3s are also important for cholesterol control. They're anti-inflammatory, too, and can even help "lubricate" the brain and assist cognitive retention. The Omega-3's we find in plants are hidden within alphanolenic acids, which

themselves are important compounds to consume.

PLANT STEROLS

These compounds are similar in structure to cholesterol; this works to your advantage. When you eat a lot of plant sterols, they compete with cholesterol to fill your body's receptors and can help block cholesterol from taking root. Eating nuts with higher-cholesterol foods will help abate the negative effects. Nuts and cheese, for example, are a winning combination for your taste buds AND your health.

INTEGRATION STATION

The following nuts have been found to be fabulous, both for taste and health:

PEANUTS

Peanuts are power-packed legumes disguised as nuts. Don't worry, this works in your favor; peanuts are typically easy to produce (so, inexpensive) and work with many flavor profiles. Peanuts are high in iron, protein, plant sterols, folate, and



monounsaturated fat. For the highest nutritional content, try peanuts with the skin on.

WALNUTS

The nut with the highest concentration of Omega-3s, the walnut's skin also contains a bevy of antioxidants. Great with everything from pesto to baked goods.

ALMONDS

A fabulous source of calcium, fiber, and monounsaturated fat. Almond meal/flour can often be subbed for wheat flour in your favorite recipe; it's a great way to add moisture, texture, taste, and protein to your cookies, cakes, and muffins. **NOTE:** The process of making almond milk ends up eliminating most of the almond's flesh; therefore, almond milk is NOT a great source of protein. It is, however, full of vitamin E.

PISTACHIOS

High concentrations of protein, fiber, and plant sterols plus that unique

flavor make pistachios a favorite. They're great for snacking, as the process of shelling slows everything down and the high protein/fiber content will keep you feeling full. In the kitchen, pistachios are typically used in baked good and meat crusts; it's a great way to make cholesterol compete with plant sterols for a spot on receptors.

RECIPES

ROASTED NUTS

Preheat your oven to 350 degrees; place nuts on a single layer in a sheet pan and bake, shaking the pan occasionally, until they smell nicely nutty and turn golden brown. Watch them carefully so they don't burn. Time will vary with different varieties.

ROASTED BRUSSELS SPROUTS WITH MAPLE-WALNUT BUTTER

The walnuts in this recipe give it a startling amount of Omega-3s and monounsaturated fat; you'll feel full for what seems like forever. Plus, the plant sterols compete with the

cholesterol in the butter for room on your receptors. Basically, you can use a good amount of butter here without coating your arteries in cholesterol. It's a win-win!

INGREDIENTS

- 2 lbs Brussels sprouts, cleaned and halved
- 3 TB vegetable oil
- 1/2 cup roughly chopped walnuts
- 2-4 TB room temperature butter
- 2 TB maple syrup
- Kosher salt, finely ground black pepper

DIRECTIONS

In a small bowl, combine butter and maple syrup. Mix with a fork until incorporated. Add walnut pieces and mix again. Refrigerate while you prepare the rest of the dish.

Try to buy consistently sized Brussels sprouts; if you have some behemoths, cut them into quarters so all your pieces are about the same size. Heat a large skillet over medium-high heat; when it's hot, add your oil until it shimmers. Add the Brussels sprouts and let them caramelize for 30-50 seconds before stirring. When the sprouts are starting to become golden-brown, begin turning and sauté over medium-high heat for 8-10 minutes (or until tender).

Reduce the heat to low; add the butter mixture. Stir until the butter is melted and the brussels sprouts are evenly coated; season to taste. Serve immediately.