



PRESERVING THE SEASON

Fresh Nuts

Come autumn, the harvest of almonds, pecans, and hazelnuts begins in earnest. Turn your favorite nuts into a rich butter to be savored for months to come.

BY MELISSA DENCHAK

IF YOU LOVE NUTS, now is the time to stock up. Freshly harvested almonds, pecans, and hazelnuts are in markets and ready to eat, raw or toasted. But then what? Stored in a kitchen cabinet, nuts can go rancid in a matter of weeks. Refrigerated in bulky bags, they can get in the way, while frozen nuts are easily forgotten. Our favorite preservation method is to turn fresh nuts into a rich, spreadable butter—one that not only makes storing easy but also transforms an everyday snack into a decadent treat.

Making nut butter is simple: Using a food processor or blender, simply grind nuts (toasted or raw) until a paste forms, adding oil as needed to aid the grinding and smooth the consistency. Some nuts, like almonds, have a higher fat content and will turn out a creamier butter. Others, like hazelnuts, produce coarser, drier results. The flavor profile of various nut butters can be equally variable: While almonds produce a sweetish butter, pecans yield a more robust flavor with a slightly bitter, tannic finish. You can adjust the flavor notes even more by adding honey, salt, maple syrup, cinnamon, or vanilla.

Smear nut butter on toast, crackers, apple slices, or bread for sandwiches. Or substitute it for peanut butter in some of your favorite recipes. (See the sidebar for other ideas.) But beware: It's addictive. Although it'll last for months in the refrigerator, you're apt to finish yours before the season's end.



Nut Butters Gone Wild

Nut butter is delicious any time of day, for breakfast, lunch, dinner, or dessert. Here, a few tasty ways to use yours up.

- Spread pecan butter between two shortbread cookies.
- Toss lo mein noodles with almond butter, soy sauce, sautéed snow peas, carrots, and scallions.
- Dollop cooked green beans with hazelnut butter.
- Swirl any nut butter into vanilla ice cream.
- Blend hazelnut or almond butter into smoothies.
- Top a bowl of oatmeal with a spoonful of any nut butter.
- Make banana and nut butter sandwiches. —M.P.



nut butter

This recipe can be used for a variety of nuts. A blender produces the smoothest results, but only a heavy-duty one is up to the task. As an alternative, use a food processor; the butter will just be a bit coarser. For almond or hazelnut butter, try substituting almond or hazelnut oil for the canola oil.

Yields about 1 cup

2 cups toasted skin-on almonds, toasted and skinned hazelnuts, or untoasted pecans

¼ tsp. fine sea salt

1½ to 4 Tbs. canola, vegetable, or other neutral-flavored oil

1 tsp. honey

Put the nuts in a heavy-duty blender or a food processor and pulse until roughly chopped. Add the salt and purée until the nuts become fairly smooth, adding only enough oil to help the nuts break down. Add the honey and pulse to mix. Transfer the nut butter to a sterile jar and store in a cool, dry place for up to 2 months or in the refrigerator for 6 to 9 months.

CHUNKY NUT BUTTER

Coarsely chop ¼ cup of the nuts. Make nut butter with the remaining nuts, and then stir in the chopped nuts by hand.

—Melissa Pellegrino

Photographs by Scott Phillips; food styling by Pamela Winn