

Health Benefits of Pecans



Pecans are not only crunchy and delicious, they are also good for your heart. They contain healthy fats that have been shown to lower cholesterol. Their anti-inflammatory compounds help to prevent multiple disease states. Pecans also contain essential vitamins, minerals, protein and dietary fiber. Like all plant foods, pecans contain no cholesterol.

A large 30-year study found regular nut consumption decreases risk for all causes of mortality. Nut intake is also associated with longevity.

WHAT MAKES PECANS GREAT?

Nutrition

1 ounce raw pecans (a little less than 1/4 cup) has 196 calories, 3g protein, 3g fiber, 20g fat and no cholesterol.

Fat

The fat in pecans and other nuts is of the healthy unsaturated type, particularly monounsaturated fatty acids (MUFA). Studies show MUFAs can help lower cholesterol and protect against heart disease and stroke, and can help regulate blood sugars.

Vitamins

Vitamins E, C and K in pecans are antioxidants that protect the heart and reduce risk of high blood pressure. Pecans also contain B vitamins riboflavin, niacin, pantothenic acid, beta-carotene, folate and B6.

Minerals

Pecans are a good source of calcium, iron, magnesium, phosphorus, zinc, copper, manganese and the antioxidant selenium. All these minerals work to protect bones and muscles. Potassium helps modulate blood pressure and copper supports a healthy immune system.

Fiber

Just one ounce of pecans contains 3 grams of dietary fiber, including both soluble and insoluble types. Insoluble fiber maintains colon health, prevents constipation and reduces risk of colorectal cancer. Soluble fiber lowers cholesterol and blunts blood sugar effects. The effects of both types of fiber on appetite control help with weight management.

Phytonutrients (plant compounds)

Pecans contain phenolic compounds oleic and ellagic acids and tannins which are associated with the prevention of cancers, particularly breast cancer.

WARNING

Tree nuts, like walnuts, cashews, almonds and pecans, are one of the top food allergens. Nuts are also high in fat. Despite being a healthy type of fat, these calories can add up quickly. One ounce per day is a serving.

BUYING & USING PECANS

Pecans are widely available year-round in major stores around the world. When buying in the shell, pecans have a long shelf life. Once out of the shell, the nuts should be stored in the refrigerator or freezer to prevent the oxidation of its monounsaturated fats.

- ◆ Roasting pecans in a dry pan or oven brings out the buttery flavor
- ◆ Choose raw pecans over commercially roasted, salted or sugared
- ◆ Toss raw or home-toasted pecans into salad, baked goods, omelets or with veggies, into yogurt or oatmeal
- ◆ Make your own trail mix with whole grain cereal, dried fruit and roasted pecans
- ◆ A traditional use of pecans is pecan pie or candied for the holidays



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Pecan Butter

Adapted from cookieandkate.com

Ingredients:

8 oz pecans, whole or pieces
Sea salt to taste
Dash of ground cinnamon (optional)

Directions:

1. Pour pecans in a large skillet over medium heat and toast, stirring often until fragrant, about 3-6 minutes. Do not let them burn.
2. Pour toasted pecans into a food processor or high-speed blender and let them cool several minutes. Then blend, pausing to scrape down the sides.
3. Add salt and cinnamon and continue blending until creamy. This may take 2 to more than 10 minutes depending on your blender.
4. Pour into a glass jar with lid and store in the refrigerator for up to a month.

Pecan Taco "Meat"

Adapted from makeitdairyfree.com

Ingredients:

2 cups pecans
1 red onion
4 cloves garlic
1/4 cup sundried tomatoes

1 Tbsp olive oil
1 Tbsp taco seasoning*
1 tsp soy sauce
1 lime's juice

Directions:

1. Soak pecans in a bowl, covered with boiling water for at least 30 minutes. Soak overnight for a softer texture.
2. Drain pecans and put into food processor or blender and pulse until you have fine "meat" crumbles. Do not overprocess.
3. Finely chop onions, garlic and sundried tomatoes.
4. Add oil to skillet and sauté onions until translucent (2-3 minutes). Add in garlic for 1 more minute.
5. Sprinkle in taco seasoning and sundried tomatoes. Stir and cook 1 more minute.
6. Add in crumbled pecans and stir. Pour in soy sauce and lime juice, stirring well.
7. Cook 7-8 minutes and serve with shells.

To make taco seasoning*

1 Tbsp chili powder
2 tsp cumin
1 tsp black pepper
1/2 tsp smoked paprika

1/4 tsp garlic powder
1/4 tsp onion powder
1/4 tsp red pepper flakes
1/4 tsp Italian seasoning or oregano

Perfect Baked Apples

Adapted from cookieandkate.com

Ingredients:

4 medium gala apples
1/2 cup rolled oats
1/4 cup lightly packed coconut sugar or brown sugar

1/4 cup chopped pecans
1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
4 Tbsp margarine, melted
3/4 cup water

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 375°F.
2. In medium mixing bowl, combine oats, sugar, pecans, cinnamon and salt. Stir in melted margarine until combined and set aside.
3. Slice off the top of the apples below the stem line (about 3/4 to 1" down), but reserving the tops. Using a small spoon, scoop out the centers leaving 1/2" around the bottom and edges. Be careful not to core through the apple.
4. Place apples upright without touching in a medium to large baking dish.
5. Divide the filling between the apples until filling is used up and top with apple top.
6. Pour water into the base of the dish and bake 45 to 55 minutes, or until skewer inserted into apple sides has only slight resistance.
7. Let apples cool slightly before transferring to serving plate. Serve with desired cream topping like whipped cream or ice cream.

REFERENCES

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