



RECIPE for health

DECEMBER 2012

featured food:
ALMONDS

By Peggy Crum, RD, Health4U Nutritionist

Almonds seem to be everywhere, in everything, and loved by (most) everyone. Although there's a surge in demand, this little nut is not a newcomer. Cultures around the globe have used almonds in their favorite dishes connecting good health and good fortune with good food. Going back to the 14th century, the Roman tradition of giving wedding favors of five almonds was to bring health, wealth, happiness, fertility and longevity. It could be said that almonds were the original health nut.

Almonds are a tree-nut grown mainly in California's central valley, which produces almost the entire US almond crop and meets over 75% of the world's demand. Almond farms are ablaze with white blossoms in late February. Each blossom has to be pollinated by a honeybee in order for the nut to grow and mature. Almonds are harvested by late September.

Thanks to their high content of the antioxidant vitamin E, almonds have a long shelf-life. Almonds stored in a cool, dry place will keep for a year or more; in the freezer, up to 2 years. Almonds tend to absorb odors so it's best to place them in a container that protects them.

What form of this versatile nut should you buy?

- **Whole** almonds for brittles, biscotti or covered in chocolate; coarsely chopped for granola.
- **Sliced** almonds for topping cakes, pastries, salads and casseroles.
- **Slivered** almonds for baking into cookies and brownies.
- Almond **flour** as a substitute for all or part of the wheat flour in baking and for coating foods for frying.
- Almond **butter** when sweetened is called almond **paste**; used in pastries and candy such as marzipan.

Blanched almonds have had their brown skins removed. Natural almonds retain their skins. Either way, you can't go wrong.

Almond Butter

Recipe developed by Corporate Chef Kurt Kwiatkowski and featured in Residential Dining Services.

Makes just over 1 cup of almond butter.

- 2 cups whole almonds, dry roasted, unsalted
- 2 Tablespoons roasted pumpkin seeds
- 1/2 teaspoon sea salt
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 2 teaspoons honey

In a food processor blend the almonds and pumpkin seeds for 12-14 minutes. Stop after 2, 4 and 6 minutes to scrape down the sides of the bowl. The lengthy processing is the most important part of the recipe—the nuts and seeds need to blend long enough to allow the oils to release. This makes the final product nice and creamy.

Scrape the almond butter into a bowl. Add the salt, cinnamon and honey and stir them in by hand. Store in tightly sealed container in the refrigerator. Stir well to incorporate the layer of separated oil before serving.

While you can buy nuts and seeds already roasted, it's easy to roast them yourself. Preheat oven to 250°F. Spread the almonds and seeds on separate baking sheets and place in oven for 10 to 15 minutes. Watch carefully so as not to burn. The nuts and seeds will dry out as they brown, making them crunchy once cooled. If not used within a few days, store in the freezer.

Try **Almond Butter** for lunch at The Gallery at Snyder/Phillips, Brody Square and Riverwalk Market at Owen on December 5.