

RECIPE for health

FEBRUARY 2011 In partnership with Health4U and Culinary Services

Featured Food:

WALNUTS



By Peggy Crum, RD, Health4U Nutritionist

Walnuts have a love connection that makes them the perfect match as February's featured food. Folklore dating back to Juno, the Roman goddess of women and marriage declared the walnut a symbol of fertility. Whether this had to do with the nut as a seed of life or the heart shape of walnut's two lobes, no one knows for sure.

Another mystery is why the common walnut is called the English walnut. The most likely explanation is that the name was passed down from medieval times when English merchant sailors transported and traded walnuts across the globe. Today, two-thirds of the world's English walnuts are produced in California where there is a movement afoot to rename them California walnuts.

Harvest time for walnuts begins in August and lasts into early November. The industry uses ideal storage conditions to allow walnuts to be available year-round. Walnuts in the shell should be free of cracks and holes, should be plump and meaty, and should break easily.

Walnuts possess a unique blend of polyunsaturated and omega-3 fatty acids, which is good for health but bad for shelf-life. Stored at room temperature, walnuts can easily turn rancid. Shelled walnuts may be stored up to six months in the refrigerator or up to one year in the freezer.

English walnuts have a subtle flavor that lends itself to many culinary applications:

- Add ground walnuts to breadcrumbs for coating salmon, chicken or pork chops
- Mix walnuts, raisins and raw oatmeal or bran to make granola
- Replace pine nuts with walnuts when making pesto for a new twist

Add sweetness by using $\frac{1}{4}$ cup walnuts, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar (or 2 tablespoons maple syrup) and a pinch of salt. Stir constantly over medium heat until caramelized. Transfer to a non-stick surface such as wax paper to cool. You'll love this as a crunchy topping on fruit or vegetable salad.

Walnut Spinach Pesto

Recipe developed by Corporate Chef Kurt Kwiatkowski and featured in Residential Dining Services. Serves 10

- $\frac{1}{2}$ c. Shelled Walnut pieces
- 1 c. Parsley
- 3 oz. Baby Spinach
- 2 Cloves of Garlic
- $\frac{1}{2}$ Jalapeno Pepper, seeded and rough cut (add more or less depending on desired heat)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ c. Grated Pecorino Romano Cheese (can substitute Parmesan or Asiago)
- $\frac{1}{3}$ c. Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 1 tsp. Lemon Zest
- Salt and Pepper to taste

In a non-stick sauté pan over medium heat, roast walnuts for five to six minutes or until they become fragrant. Place the roasted nuts and garlic into the food processor and blend for one minute. Add in parsley, spinach, cheese and jalapeno and pulse until well mixed. Continue to pulse mixture while streaming oil into the processor. Add lemon zest, and salt and pepper to taste.

Walnut Spinach Pesto will be served for lunch at Akers, Brody Square, Case, The Gallery at Snyder/Phillips, Shaw and Yakeley on February 24. Visit www.eatatstate.com for dining hall hours and menus.

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