

Toasting Nuts

Nuts are a great source of monounsaturated fats. Toasting nuts intensifies the flavor and this is especially helpful when making reduced-fat dishes.



There are three ways to toast nuts.

Stovetop

Because of nuts' high fat content, you won't need to add oil to the skillet. Heat a dry skillet until hot, add the nuts and spread them out into a single layer. Stir frequently to keep the nuts from turning too brown. Cook for 3 to 5 minutes.

Oven

Begin by preheating the oven to 350°F. Place nuts in a single layer in a shallow baking pan. Bake the nuts for about 10 minutes, being sure to stir or shake them about halfway through the baking time.

Microwave

Place nuts in a microwave-safe dish. Microwave, uncovered, on high for 2-3 minutes or until lightly toasted, stirring twice. Watch carefully to avoid burning the nuts. You may need to adjust the time, depending on your microwave's wattage and the amount of nuts you are toasting.

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Frittata

A frittata is an Italian omelet. The ingredients are mixed with the eggs rather than folded inside, like an omelet. It is partially cooked on the stovetop and finished in the oven.

The basic ingredients for a frittata for four include:

- 1 Tablespoon olive oil
- 1 Tablespoon butter
- Filling ingredients (see note below)
- Salt and black pepper, to taste
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 8 large eggs
- ½ cup cheese (your choice)



Directions:

1. Adjust the oven rack to the upper-middle position and pre-heat oven to 400°F.
2. Heat oil in a 10-inch ovenproof skillet over medium high heat. Add filling ingredients and season with salt and pepper. Add garlic.
3. Beat eggs and any other seasonings (i.e., Italian seasoning, parsley, pesto). Add to skillet. Cook without stirring, until eggs begin to set around the edges. Add cheese. Transfer skillet to oven; bake until the eggs are puffed and set, 8 to 10 minutes.

Filling Ingredients:

Any combination of ingredients will work: Allow ½ cup of vegetables and ¼ of cup meat per person. Filling ingredients should be cooked before adding the eggs or the eggs will cook before the ingredients are done.

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SPRINGTIME COOKING 2009

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Effortless Spinach Salad with Raspberry Dressing

Spinach Salad

Serves 6

Ingredients:

6 cups spinach (washed and dried)
½ small red onion, sliced
2 cups fresh strawberries, sliced
½ cup dried apricots
¼ cup chopped pecans, toasted

Raspberry Dressing (recipe follows)

Directions:

Place spinach in a large bowl. Top with red onion, strawberries, dried apricots and pecans.

Raspberry Dressing

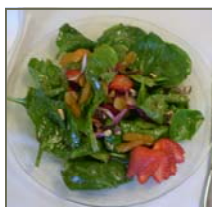
Makes about 1/3 cup.

Ingredients:

2 Tablespoons seedless raspberry jam
2 Tablespoons balsamic vinegar
1½ Tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
¼ teaspoon salt

Directions:

Combine jam, vinegar, oil and salt. Stir until smooth. Serve with Effortless Spinach Salad.



Rhubarb Streusel Bars

Ingredients:

Makes 16 bars.

1½ cups quick-cooking oatmeal
1 cup all-purpose flour
¾ cup brown sugar, packed
½ cup butter or margarine, softened
¼ cup sugar
2 Tablespoons all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon ginger
3 cups fresh or frozen sliced rhubarb
Ginger Icing (recipe follows)
1 Tablespoon minced crystallized ginger (optional)

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. In a medium bowl stir together sugar, 2 table-
spoons flour and ginger. Add rhubarb; toss to coat. Set aside.
3. In a large bowl, combine oatmeal, flour, and
brown sugar. Cut in butter or margarine until mix-
ture resembles coarse crumbs. Reserve 1 cup of
mixture.
4. Press remaining mixture into an 8 X 8-in pan.
Bake for 25 minutes.
5. Top hot crust with rhubarb mixture. Sprinkle
reserved streusel over rhubarb. Press down
slightly. Bake for 30 to 35 minutes. Drizzle
ginger icing over top and sprinkle with crystallized
ginger, if desired.

Ginger Icing

In a small bowl stir together ¾ cup sifted powdered sugar, ¼ teaspoon ginger and 3 to 4 teaspoon milk.

Buying and Storing Fresh Produce

- Purchase produce without bruises or damage.
- Go directly home from the market! Avoid side trips. Produce may decline in quality if left sitting in your car, especially when it is warm.
- Produce that tastes best stored at room temperature include: melons, onions, potatoes, sweet potatoes, tomatoes and winter squashes. Store in a clean, dry, well-ventilated place, away from direct sunlight. Remove from plastic bags; leaving produce on the counter in a plastic bag may slow ripening and increase off-odors and decay.
- Some produce can be ripened on the counter and then stored in the refrigerator. Examples include: peaches, pears and plums.
- Most other produce keeps best when stored in a clean refrigerator at a temperature of 40 °F or below. Use your refrigerator crisper drawer for whole produce.
- Store fruits in a separate crisper drawer from vegetables. Fruits give off ethylene gas which can shorten the storage life of vegetables. Some vegetables give off odors that can be absorbed by fruits.
- Refrigerate produce in perforated plastic bags to help maintain moisture yet provide air flow. If you don't have access to commercial, perforated bags, use a sharp object to make several small holes in a food-grade plastic bag.
- Wash hands before working with produce.
- Wash produce thoroughly under clean, running water. Wash produce before you use it, NOT when you bring it home!

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