

Home on the Range

Falling for Walnuts

Rejoice this baking season in an abundant and low-priced supply.

As a fall chill enters the air, what could be more appealing than a warm, fragrant kitchen filled with freshly baked desserts? Baking is part of the autumn landscape, and walnuts are a continuing theme in family recipes that withstand the test of time.

Walnuts have always played an important role in the fall baking tradition. Walnuts' unique, mellow flavor, delightful crunch and toasted aroma are an incomparable component of many baked desserts. And this is the season to stock

up on these very popular baking nuts—walnut growers have been blessed with an abundance of high-quality walnuts, have reduced prices accordingly. To celebrate, a liberal sprinkle of walnuts is in order.

The flavorful rewards of baking with walnuts are illustrated in the following recipes—three of the most popular recipes from generations of baking research at the Diamond Walnut test kitchens.



HARVEST WALNUT PIE

- 3 eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 cup dark corn syrup
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 (9-inch) unbaked pastry pie shell
- 1 1/2 cups large pieces walnuts

Heat oven to 400°F. Combine eggs, sugar, flour, corn syrup, butter and vanilla, blend well. Pour into unbaked pie shell, arrange walnuts on top. Bake in lower third of oven at 400°F for 15 minutes. Reduce oven temperature to 350°F, bake an additional 35 to 45 minutes or until center appears set. Cool completely. 8 servings.

BEST CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES

- 1 cup butter softened
- 1 1/3 cups sugar
- 2/3 cup firmly packed brown sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 12-oz. pkg. (2 cups) semi-sweet chocolate pieces
- 2 cups chopped walnuts

Heat oven to 350°F. Combine butter, sugar, brown sugar, eggs and vanilla, beat until light and fluffy. Stir in flour, baking soda and salt, mix well. Stir in chocolate and walnuts. Drop by tablespoonfuls onto ungreased cookie sheets. Bake in upper third of oven at 350°F for 10 minutes or until set. (Cookies do not brown very much. Texture is soft when removed from oven but slightly crisp and chewy when cool.) Remove from cookie sheets, cool on wire racks. About 5 dozen cookies. Turn to page B3

RASPBERRY WALNUT SHORTBREAD BARS

- 1 1/4 cups plus 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour, divided
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup butter
- 1/3 cup raspberry jam
- 2 eggs
- 1/2 cup firmly packed brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1/8 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 cup chopped walnuts

Heat oven to 350°F. Lightly grease a 9-inch square pan. Combine 1 1/4 cups flour and 1/2 cup sugar, using pastry blender or fork, cut in butter until mixture resembles fine meal. Press into greased pan. Bake at 350°F for 20 minutes or just until edges are lightly golden. Spread hot crust with raspberry jam. Combine eggs, brown sugar and vanilla, beat well. Combine remaining 2 tablespoons flour and baking soda, stir into egg mixture. Fold in walnuts. Spoon over jam, spread lightly to pan corners. Return to oven; bake additional 20 or 25 minutes or until top is set. Cool completely, cut into bars. 20 bars.

TIPS

- Toasting enhances the flavor and crispness of walnuts. To toast in the oven, spread shelled walnuts on baking sheet or shallow pan and bake at 350°F for 10–12 minutes, stir several times.
- You can toast walnuts in the microwave. Place 3/4 to 1 cup of walnuts in a single layer in a glass pie plate. Microwave on high (650 to 700 watt, 100%) for 4 to 5 minutes or until toasted, stirring every 2 minutes, cool.
- Walnuts aren't just for baked goods—these wonderfully versatile nuts also enhance pastas, salads, appetizers and sauces and contribute valuable protein to vegetarian dishes.
- To keep your walnuts fresh, store shelled nuts in an airtight container in the refrigerator or freezer.
- Do not shell walnuts until ready to use.
- Always measure walnuts after chopping, and for best results, use a chef's knife to chop walnuts.



Did You Know...

- Walnuts were a favorite delicacy of the ancient Romans and were used not only for eating but also to dye wool and color hair.
- The word "walnut" originates from *walnut*, an Old English word for "Welsh nut."
- Sales of walnuts are greater than almonds and pecans combined.
- An average of 400 million pounds of walnuts are harvested each year from the central and northern sections of California.
- California produces virtually all of the walnuts grown commercially in the United States and exports them to more than 100 other countries.
- Walnuts are high in food energy, are a good source of vegetable protein, contain no cholesterol and are low in saturated fats and sodium.
- Walnuts are harvested from mid-September through November.
- After a walnut tree is planted, it takes six years to bear fruit and isn't considered mature until it's 12 to 14 years old. The tree can continue to produce for as long as 100 years.

HISTORY

Walnuts are one of the oldest tree foods known to man, dating back to 7,000 B.C. The nuts, which grew wild over much of Europe and Asia, were introduced into China from central Asia in 140 B.C., and by 618 they were popular among the Chinese upper class. These so-called English (more properly, Persian) walnuts were introduced into California in the late 1700s by the Spanish Franciscan priests. In 1853 walnuts were exhibited at the first horticultural fair of the California State Agricultural Society, and by 1868 approximately 31,000 walnut trees were being grown in California. The launch of the walnut industry in the 1860s is credited to Joseph Sexton, an innovative nurseryman. As the production of walnuts increased, growers began forming marketing associations or cooperatives whose goals emphasized quality production. In 1912 the California Walnut Growers Association was formed to receive, pack, ship and market the walnuts grown by its members and to act as their representative in the crop distribution. The association took the name Diamond Walnut Growers in 1956, and by the 1990s was handling more than 47 percent of California's annual walnut crop thanks to its reputation for consistency and quality through state-of-the-art processing equipment and personal, hands-on attention to all its products.

