## Family Living **Focus**

Nancy Wiker

Lancaster Co. **Extension Agent** 



**Chestnut Dressing** 

My mother makes the best dressing (some call it stuffing or filling) for the holiday bird. After 50 plus years, she has the recipe perfected. On occasion she altered the recipe; adding alien ingredients such as cornbread or dried fruit, with great protest from the rest of us. One year she decided to add roasted chestnuts, with great results.

Chestnuts found in stores are generally European in origin. They are similar to the native American Chestnut, but are resistant to the blight that killed that American trees. They should not be confused with the horse chestnut, which is closely related to the buckeye and not recommended for eating.

Harvested in the fall, the reddish brown nuts have a cream-

colored kernel covered with a thin brown skin. Choose chestnuts that are plump, heavy and firm, with glossy shells. Soft, light, nuts with dull or wrinkled shells are too old. After picking, they are generally seasoned for several days to remove excess moisture by spreading the nuts 1-2 layers deep on trays made of half-inch hardware cloth. When cured, store in a cool dry place that is inaccessible to rodents and insects.

Cook chestnuts using one of the following methods:

Roasting: With the tip of a sharp knife cut an X in the flat side of each nut. Roasting over an open fire requires a covered utensil with a long handle. Nuts will build up steam and explode even after removing from the heat. In the oven, roast the cross cut nuts for 15-20 minutes at 425

Boiling: Cut the nuts in half with a sharp knife. In a shallow pan, cover with only enough water so nuts are not completely covered. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer for 15 minutes. Drain and allow to cool slightly. The kernels should come out easily. The longer they are cooked, the mealier they will become. We like to dip the cooked nuts in melted butter with salt added.

Microwave: This method requires a bit more experimentation, but can yield excellent results. Cut the nuts in half and place cut end down on a double layer of paper toweling. Start with eight medium size nuts and cook for 1-2 minutes.

Cooked chestnuts may be kept in the refrigerator in jars for several days, or in the freezer. Fresh and cooked chestnuts can be frozen, either peeled or in their shells.

No matter which preparation method you use, you must remove the outer hard shell and the thin inner brown skin. It is easier to peel chestnuts that have been cooked and are still hot.

Chestnuts are a good source of potassium and a source of vitamin C, copper, magnesium, and some B vitamins. Eaten raw or undercooked they can cause bloating and gas.

These tasty nuts can be added to soups, salads, and stuffings. They can also be ground into flour that is added to cakes or made into flat cakes, pancakes, waffles, or bread. Chestnut puree is used to flavor ices, puddings, and pastry creams. Mont Blanc, a famous dessert, consists of a meringue base that is covered with a mound of chestnut puree topped with Chantilly cream.

A handful of whole chestnuts makes a tasty addition to braised cabbage. In Europe chestnuts are traditionally served with game or poultry, especially during the holiday season. One pound of chestnuts yields a little more than 8 ounces (2 cups) of peeled

**Ruth's Chestnut Dressing** ½ pound chestnuts

4 tablespoons melted butter

½ cup chopped celery 1/4 cup onion, minced

½ teaspoon salt 2 teaspoons poultry seasoning

1 beaten egg

2 cups soft bread crumbs Prepare, peel, and chop chestnuts. Melt butter in large pan, saute chestnuts, celery, and onion. Add salt, poultry seasoning, egg and bread crumbs. Toss

Yields enough stuffing to accompany a 7-8 pound bird. Bake covered in a casserole dish at 350 F until it reaches an internal temperature of 165F.

## York Society 26

York County Farm Women #26 celebrated Farm Women's Day in October with a tour of "Haines Shoe House" in York.

After the tour the group had lunch and held the monthly meeting at Rutter's Restaurant on Mt. Zion Road.

Vice president Jan Sechler conducted the business meeting.

Ten members were present. The Christmas banquet will be held at the Lewisberry Grange

Nine members will attend the County Convention.

Donations were made to York County 4-H Club, York Rescue Mission, New Life for Girls, Crop Walk, and Diabetes Association. Elizabeth Moody won the door prize.

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## Why Do Leaves Change Color

Summer's green leaves have been replaced by bright autumn colors like red, orange, gold, and brown. These color changes are caused by three things: leaf pigment, length of night, and the weather

There are three types of pigments. The first, chlorophyll, gives leaves their green color. Chlorophyll is needed for photosynthesis-the process that helps plants use sunlight to make sugar for food.

Carotenoids, a second type of pigment, produce the yellow, orange, and brown colors in things like corn, carrots, and daffodils.

Anthocyanins give color to cranberries, red apples, blueberries, strawberries and more. Both chlorophyll and carotenoids are present in the leaf cells throughout the growing season. Anthocyanins are made in the autumn because of bright light and excess plant sugars in the leaf cells.

Leaves are also affected by the increasing length of night. As darkness times lengthen, biochemical processes begin to change the leaves. The weather is the third factor-especially temperature and moisture.

The brightest color displays are usually in years with a succession of sunny days and cool, crisp nights.



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