

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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Enjoying Nuts

The holidays are prime nut time, and I'm not referring to any of the two-legged variety! More than any other time of the year, this is when nuts seem to show up in all kinds of foods. Nuts go in Christmas cookies and fruit cakes, in pies and sweet breads, fruit salads and turkey dressing. Many homes just wouldn't feel right without a dish of nuts for crunching on. The questions coming to my office have mostly been about which kind of nut to use, which is best?

Is there a best, or even a better nut? Despite its great taste and versatility, it's easier to say which is probably the worst. That's the coconut. Coconuts have more saturated fat than any other nut. But it's hard to eat a whole coconut at once! So, how do the other nuts compare?

There's not a lot of difference in calories among the common nuts. Macadamia nuts have the most calories per ounce, just over 200. Pistachios have the least, just a little more than 160 calories. All the others, almonds, cashews, peanuts and walnuts are between those two. But consider that those calories are for each ounce, just 2 measly tablespoons each or between 20 and 30 nuts. You see how quickly the calories can add up!

If you want to snack on nuts set some limits. An easy way to portion out an ounce of nuts is to use one of the little strong mint tins. A tin will hold just about 1 ounce of shelled nuts. Fill your tin in the morning, and put the big jar of nuts in the back of the

cupboard. Hopefully out of sight, out of mind until tomorrow.

The reason nuts are so high in calories is all the fat they hide. Here's where the discussion starts, which ones are better? Macadamias have the most (16.7 g) monounsaturated fat and walnuts have the least (2.5 g). Pecans have the most polyunsaturated fat (6.1 g), and macadamias have the least (0.4 g). So which one is best? Really there's no great difference. Both mono- and polyunsaturated fats are heart-healthy. According to the American Heart Association neither makes our bad cholesterol go up, and both might help bring it down. So they're all about the same.

Another kind of fat in the discussion is omega-3 fat. Many people think that there is only one kind of omega-3, and that it's good for your heart. The truth is there are at least 3 common types and they are not nearly the same. Walnuts have a lot of the ALA type, as does flaxseed. But ALA is not the kind of omega-3 that protects our heart from attack or keeps our brains from getting Alzheimer's disease. Neither walnuts nor flaxseed have a lot of the kinds that do that. And unfortunately our bodies do not do a very good job of changing one kind into another. If we tried to get all the good omega-3 we needed from walnuts we'd be eating them by the ton! That would not be good for our waistlines or our hearts.

So, if you like nuts, go ahead. They are healthier than many other foods. They have some fiber, some protein, some very good minerals. Just remember that they also have a lot of fat and the calories that go with the fat. Eat cautiously. Don't eat out of the jar, it's too easy to nibble down the whole jarful. Chop them finely to spread the flavor around in recipes, and use a little bit less than the recipe calls for. Add some extra flavoring, almond or butter nut extract, to boost up the flavor. In many recipes you can

substitute half of them with GrapeNuts® cereal. Most people won't notice the difference! Just put a few out at a time, in a covered dish, so you're not tempted to nibble all day. Then sit back and enjoy the holiday nuts, in the food and in your family. They're all good for us!

Here's a lower-calorie version of a pretty salad for the holiday table. Chop the nuts finely so there are a few in every bite. If you want some extra red to balance the green add half a diced sweet red pepper. You can use the broccoli stalks for soup.

Holiday Broccoli Salad

1 large head broccoli (about 1 ½ pounds)	2 Tbsp fat-free milk
¾ cup light salad dressing or light mayo	2 Tbsp white vinegar
3 packets low-calorie sweetener	1 small red onion, thinly sliced
½ cup raisins	1/3 cup chopped pecans

Clean and trim the broccoli. Cut florets into bite-size pieces. Put in microwave safe dish, cover and cook on high for 3 minutes. Rinse with cold water to chill. In small bowl mix the salad dressing or mayonnaise, milk, vinegar and sweetener. In large bowl combine broccoli, onion, raisins, pecans, and red pepper if using. Pour dressing over salad and stir to combine. Add pepper to taste if desired. Cover and refrigerate overnight. Serves 8.

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