

MAY 2017 FOOD OF THE MONTH

WALNUTS

Our pick for this month is the crunchy, hearty nut known for its many health-protective effects on the cardiovascular system: the walnut. Walnuts have a long history as food, having been around from as far back as 7,000 B.C., and were popular as food for the royals in ancient Persia. Nowadays, the U.S. is a major producer of walnuts, with the bulk of the nuts coming from the state of California. The shelled nut has two off-white wavy lobes attached to each other, covered in a thin brown skin. These lobes are protected by a tough, brown, round or oblong-shaped shell.

Walnuts are an excellent source of the polyunsaturated omega-3 fatty acids, specifically alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), as well as monounsaturated fats. These fats both have protective effects on the heart and the rest of the cardiovascular system, with various studies showing that they help with prevention of hypertension, improvement in blood cholesterol profile, and reduction in molecules that cause atherosclerosis (formation of plaque inside arteries that leads to heart disease). Walnuts also contain an antioxidant called ellagic acid, which appears to benefit the immune system and have anticancer properties.

Nutrition Tidbits for Walnuts:

1 oz. (14 halves) of shelled whole walnuts contains:

- **Calories:** 185 kcal
- **Fat:** 18.5 g
- **Carbohydrates:** 3.9 g
- **Fiber:** 1.9 g
- **Protein:** 4.3 g
- **Glycemic Index (GI):** Low (below 55)

When buying walnuts, if you have access to unshelled ones, choose ones that are heavy for their size without any stains or cracks on the shell. The majority of stores also sells shelled nuts in the bulk section; if you choose to buy the shelled variety, make sure the store has a good turnover rate, as the high fat content means the shelled walnuts can go rancid easily (sniff them to be sure). Avoid shelled nuts that seem soft or rubbery. Once shelled, the nuts should be stored in an airtight container in the fridge or freezer.

WORLD CLASS. LOCAL TOUCH.

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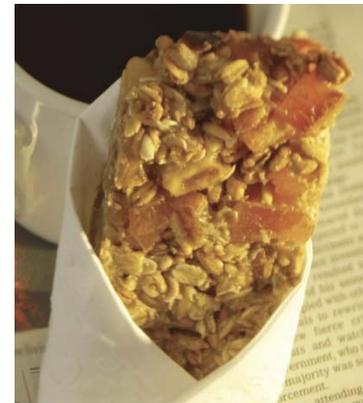
Ways to Include More Walnuts in Your Diet:

- Sprinkle a handful on yogurt, cereal, oatmeal, salads, or stir-fries
- Use toasted, crumbled walnuts as a topping or crust for baked or roasted fish
- Grind up walnuts and use them in place of peanut butter for spreads or dips

Apricot Walnut Cereal Bars

Ingredients

- 3 cups old-fashioned rolled oats
- ½ cup chopped walnuts (about 2 ounces)
- 3 cups unsweetened puffed-grain cereal, such as Kashi
- 2 cups chopped dried apricots
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- 12 ounces silken tofu, drained (about 1⅓ cups)
- 1 large egg
- ½ cup canola oil
- 1 cup honey
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- 2 tablespoons freshly grated lemon zest
- ½ teaspoon of salt



Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Coat a large (15¼-by-10¼-inch) jellyroll-style pan with cooking spray.
2. Spread oats and walnuts on a baking sheet with sides. Bake until fragrant and light golden, 8 to 10 minutes. Transfer to a large bowl and add puffed cereal, dried apricots, flour and salt; stir to combine.
3. Meanwhile, puree tofu, egg, oil, honey, vanilla and lemon zest in a food processor or blender until smooth, scraping down the sides as needed. Make a well in the center of the oat mixture; fold in the tofu mixture until combined. Spread evenly in the prepared pan.
4. Bake until firm in the center and golden brown, 35 to 40 minutes. Let cool completely in the pan on a wire rack before cutting into bars with a sharp knife.

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