



5 Easy Recipes Spiced Nuts

As much as we adore butter, egg whites make a better binder for glueing spice to nut.

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NUTS ARE EXPENSIVE, so it's especially disappointing when you make a batch of spiced nuts for the holidays that just doesn't measure up. The best recipes produce nuts that are crisp and evenly coated with spices, and they don't turn soggy after a day or two. In the test kitchen, we've had plenty of chances to perfect our technique. We've also developed a favorite recipe that calls for sugar, cinnamon, ginger, and coriander. This year, we reprised our easy method, and we rummaged through our spice rack to come up with some habit-forming variations.

Since you're going to flavor the nuts yourself and bake them for close to an hour, it makes no sense to use toasted, salted, or dry-roasted nuts. Start with a blank canvas: raw, unsalted nuts. You can use a single type or mix and match whichever nuts strike your fancy.

Different recipes use different tricks to get the spices to adhere. Some rely on oil or melted butter, but we've found spiced nuts made this way have spotty coatings and leave fingers slick and greasy. Other recipes use simple syrup (made by boiling sugar and water), which essentially makes for chewy nut candy, not a savory snack and not what we were looking for. Mixing the nuts with corn syrup or maple syrup turns the nuts soft and gooey within a couple of days—we wanted something that would hold through the holiday season.

We took a fourth approach, using egg whites to help the spices adhere. The whites are too thick to coat the nuts evenly, however, so we add a splash of water (to dilute them) and salt (which helps keep the egg proteins apart, thus preventing them from coagulating). As an extra precaution against the whites leaving rubbery clots on the nuts as they bake, we drain the nuts thoroughly in a colander, letting any excess whites drip away. Only then do we toss the nuts with sugar and spices, for an even, delicate "shell" around each baked nut.

Turn your oven to a moderate 300 degrees. Slow and low, the nuts bake long enough for both nut and coating to crisp. Higher temperatures scorch the coating before the nuts are toasted; use lower temperatures and Christmas will

be over before you're enjoying the nuts. To prevent them from sticking, we line a baking sheet with parchment paper and spray it with baking spray.

Don't go crazy with the spices. Too heavy a hand and you'll think you're eating potpourri. Our master recipe uses a cinnamon, ginger, and coriander blend. To spice things up (sorry, we couldn't help ourselves), we developed variations with a hot-and-tart chili powder-lime coating (we like it with cashews, almonds, and peanuts); floral cardamom and orange zest (try almonds and pistachios); caramel-y Coca-Cola and five-spice powder (tropical macadamia nuts and cashews go nicely); and, should your fancy turn toward Italy, rosemary and lemon (use hazelnuts, almonds, and walnuts, all of which grow there).

CRUNCHY SPICED NUTS

Makes about 5 cups

You can use any variety of unsalted raw nuts. To double the recipe, adjust oven racks to upper-middle and lower-middle positions and bake the nuts on 2 baking sheets, switching and rotating sheets halfway through baking.

- 1 large egg white
- 1 tablespoon water
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 pound unsalted nuts (see note)
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander

1. COAT NUTS Adjust oven rack to upper-middle position and heat oven to 300 degrees. Line baking sheet with parchment paper and coat with cooking spray. Whisk egg white, water, and salt in large bowl. Add nuts and toss to coat. Drain in colander thoroughly, 4 to 5 minutes.

2. SEASON NUTS Mix sugar, cinnamon, ginger, and coriander in large bowl. Add drained nuts and toss to coat. Spread nuts evenly on prepared baking sheet and bake until dry and crisp, 40 to 45 minutes, rotating sheet halfway through baking time. Cool completely. Break nuts apart and serve. (Nuts can be stored in airtight container for 3 weeks.)



Once you understand the basic method, vary the nuts and the spices to your heart's content.

CHILI-LIME SPICED NUTS

Use a combination of cashews, peanuts, and almonds in this spicy-sweet variation.

Prepare Crunchy Spiced Nuts, replacing water with 1 tablespoon lime juice and adding 1 tablespoon grated lime zest to egg white mixture. Substitute 2½ teaspoons chili powder, 1 teaspoon ground cumin, and ½ teaspoon cayenne pepper for cinnamon, ginger, and coriander.

ORANGE-CARDAMOM SPICED NUTS

Almonds and pistachios are a good combination here.

Prepare Crunchy Spiced Nuts, replacing water with 1 tablespoon orange juice and adding 1 tablespoon grated orange zest and ¼ teaspoon vanilla extract to the egg white mixture. Substitute 1 teaspoon ground cardamom and ½ teaspoon pepper for cinnamon, ginger, and coriander.

ASIAN SPICED NUTS

We like macadamia nuts and cashews in this variation. The cola lends sweetness and depth of flavor.

Prepare Crunchy Spiced Nuts, replacing water with 1 tablespoon Coca-Cola.

Decrease ginger to ½ teaspoon and substitute 1½ teaspoons five-spice powder for cinnamon and coriander.

ROSEMARY-LEMON SPICED NUTS

Try a combination of almonds, walnuts, and hazelnuts for this Italian-inspired variation.

Prepare Crunchy Spiced Nuts, replacing water with 1 tablespoon lemon juice and adding 1 tablespoon grated lemon zest to egg white mixture. Substitute ½ cup packed light brown sugar, 1 tablespoon minced fresh rosemary, and ¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes for granulated sugar, cinnamon, ginger, and coriander.

TEST KITCHEN TECHNIQUE

Achieve Adhesion

Recipes that use oil, butter, or sugar syrup as a binder for spiced nuts can be messy and greasy. We prefer to coat the nuts with an egg white (diluted with a little water) before tossing them with spices and baking. To avoid unappealing clumps of egg white on the baked nuts, drain the nuts thoroughly before adding the spices.