



## Nutrition Nibbles

### Give the Gift of Food and Fun

It's December and the holiday season is in full force...so are shopping expeditions and gift-giving parties. Not sure what to give friends, family, and coworkers this year? On a tight budget and looking for creative gift ideas? Try giving the gift of food, kitchen gadgets, and fun activities this season. There's something for everyone and every budget!

**Food:** Not Betty Crocker? You can give away other foods besides homemade cookies, cakes, and candies. There are even healthy food gift alternatives.

- Create a signature spice mix or "rub." Package up a blend of your favorite dried herbs and spices in a labeled tin along with a note identifying suggested uses. Ta-da! Your friends will think of you every time they use it.
- For the beverage lovers in your life, wrap up some gourmet coffee, special hot cocoa mixes, or exotic teas. Not only will they have a special treat to enjoy but something they can use when they're entertaining this season.
- Give the gift of health foods. Nut mixes, specialty olives,

and fancy olive oils make wonderfully tasty, not to mention heart-healthy, ways to enjoy the season.

- Forget the fruit cake and give away fruit instead. Fresh cutie Clementine mandarin oranges, apples, pomegranates, and cranberries are festive holiday fruits that pack flavor and nutrients in each and every bite. Dried fruits make a nice gift too.
- Rather than a gift card to a favorite restaurant, deliver a favorite meal to your friends instead. Sure you could cook it from scratch and drop it off *or* you can wrap up a bottle of wine, gourmet pasta sauce, and whole wheat noodles and leave the surprise on the doorstep instead!
- Lastly, if you have a closely guarded secret family recipe, you can create special recipe cards and give this heirloom treasure away.

**Kitchen** Gadgets: It's always fun to receive kitchen tools, whether you're new to the kitchen or a long time expert. Win over the special people in your life with these ideas:

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### College Corner: College-Friendly Superfoods

"Superfoods" is a common buzz word these days. What does it really mean? And are all superfoods super expensive, making them out of reach for college students?

**Superfoods** refer to foods with an especially high nutrient content, thought to provide a special, or super, health benefit as a result. For example, the Brazilian acai berry is touted as the perfect blend of energy, antioxidants, amino acids, and healthy fats to ward off signs of aging. However, acai berries come with a high cost. Since they are native to Brazil, acai berries are most commonly available in the US in juice form with an average price tag of \$45! The great news? You don't have to go on an exotic shopping spree or spend your tuition money to take advantage of superfoods. Try these budget-friendly ones instead:

**Beans and Lentils:** Black beans, kidney beans, pinto beans, garbanzo beans, lentils, black-eyed peas, and split peas offer quite a big health benefit in a small fiber-rich package. Linked to lowering blood

## Give the Gift continued...

- For the Baker: You can never have too many silicone spatulas, mixing bowls, cookie sheets or cake pans. Pick a few of your own favorites to share with another.
- For the Cook: Ladles, spoons, tongs, hot pads, aprons, dish towels, and bamboo cutting boards are always useful in the kitchen.
- For the Newbie: If you know of someone just starting out (perhaps a college student or recent graduate), wrap up dish towels, measuring cups and spoons, a nice pot or pan, and a basic cookbook. These make a great foundation for any kitchen.
- For the Family: Need a gift for an entire family? Try filling a cute cookie jar with cookie cutters and decorative sprinkles. Give placemats along with a family-themed cookbook. You can also find unique family-oriented kitchen gadgets to give. Popcorn popper anyone?

**Fun**: Instead of a physical gift, give the gift of physical activity.

- Gift certificates to play a

round of golf (or mini golf) guarantee a good time.

- Treat your family and friends to bowling night. Offer to buy the first game and get a bunch of laughs.
- For the food aficionado, purchase a cooking lesson or wine tasting.
- Wrap up the gift of old fashioned fun with a classic board game like Scrabble or Monopoly or get people on their feet with Pictionary.

Hopefully you have some new gift-giving strategies this season. Wishing you all the best!

### Green Beans with Cranberries and Walnuts

16 ounces frozen green beans  
1/2 tsp vegetable oil  
1/4 cup chopped fresh cranberries  
2 tablespoons chopped walnuts  
1 Tbsp honey

Place green beans in medium-sized casserole dish and microwave on high until heated and tender, about 6 minutes. Meanwhile, heat a small nonstick skillet over medium high heat and add the oil. Cook the cranberries and walnuts briefly until the cranberries are tender. Toss in the green beans and honey. Serve hot. Makes 4, 1/2 cup servings.

Per serving: 80 cal, 3 g fat, 0 g sat fat, 10 mg sodium, 13 g carb, 4 g fiber, 2 g protein. Recipe Courtesy of Food and Health Communications, [www.foodandhealth.com](http://www.foodandhealth.com)

## College Corner continued...

pressure, regulating blood sugar, and cancer prevention, beans and lentils are an affordable and tasty protein source. Whether from a can or topping a salad, try incorporating beans and lentils into your diet several times each week.

**Oats**: Oats and oatmeal are rich in soluble fiber that helps lower LDL (or “bad”) cholesterol and control blood sugars. Also a good source of magnesium and selenium, oats may protect the body against certain types of cancer. Look for cereals, bars, and breads that contain whole grain oats.

**Yogurt**: Low fat yogurt is a tasty way to take in calcium for strong bones and teeth. Yogurt with “live and active cultures” or probiotics can enhance the availability of certain vitamins and minerals, including calcium, in your body. Probiotics may also help protect your digestive tract by keeping the “good bugs” in your gut as well as improve lactose intolerance. Yogurt makes the perfect portable snack for any student.

Other wallet-friendly superfoods that you might enjoy: **walnuts, broccoli, oranges, and tomatoes**. Have fun incorporating these health foods into your diet!

## Favorite Food

Lots of people are curious about what dietitians eat when they are “off-duty.” Nothing says December like peppermint. I love cuddling up with a cup of hot peppermint tea or peppermint cocoa while nibbling on a homemade peppermint-flavored cookie.

Did you know that peppermint actually has proven health benefits? It helps calm an upset stomach, eases tension headaches, and acts as a decongestant when you have a cold. Basically, peppermint is the antidote to Christmas shopping chaos and the stressful holiday season! Arm yourself with some peppermint this month!