

# For The Very Best Holiday Stuffings Add Italian Chestnuts

(NAPSA)—Whether it accompanies a Thanksgiving turkey or Christmas goose, everyone's favorite part of the holiday meal is the stuffing. Recipes abound, but some of the best feature another holiday classic—the chestnut.

Chestnuts lend a gentle crunch and sweet nuttiness to soft bread stuffing, which complements all manner of roasted meats and fowl. With their woody fragrance, the aroma of roasting chestnuts fills a kitchen like nothing else, mingling with the scents of dried leaves and evergreens, and setting the tone for the season's festivities.

When preparing chestnut stuffing, it's important to use fresh chestnuts, never canned, which cannot compare in texture and taste. Look for whole chestnuts in the supermarket from October to April. Chestnuts are imported from different parts of the world, but the sweetest, most flavorful nuts hail from Italy.

While traditional chestnut stuffing consists of little more than chopped nuts bound with egg, butter, and breadcrumbs, the recipe lends itself perfectly to variation. Chestnuts pair beautifully with onions, herbs, sausage, dried fruit and autumnal ingredients like wild rice. So this year, consider adding these versatile nuts to your regular stuffing recipe. The recipes below are fresh, flavorful twists on classic stuffing combinations.

## How to Roast and Peel Fresh Chestnuts

- First, cut an X into the flat side of each nut with a sharp, pointy knife. Spread them out on a rimmed baking sheet and sprinkle lightly with water. Roast at 400°F for 15 to 20 minutes. Peel while warm, reheating them briefly if they cool and become difficult to peel.

- For microwaving, place 12 evenly-sized pierced nuts around the outer edge of a paper plate. Cook on high for 2 minutes.



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Many holiday stuffings taste better with freshly roasted chestnuts, imported from Italy.

## Chestnut Stuffing with Italian Sausage and Sage

Makes enough stuffing for 1 small turkey (about 14 pounds)

- ¼ cup olive oil
- ¾ pound mild Italian sausage, casings removed
- 2 onions, chopped
- 2 celery stalks, chopped
- Salt and black pepper
- 1½ cups roasted, peeled, chopped Italian chestnuts
- 3 tablespoons minced fresh sage
- 6 cups stale white bread cubes
- ¾ cup dry white wine or chicken broth
- 1 large egg, well beaten

1. Place oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add sausage, breaking it up with a spoon, until no longer pink, about 6 to 8 minutes. Add onion, celery, salt and pepper and sauté until tender, about 5 minutes. Add chestnuts and sage and cook for another 2 minutes. Transfer to a large bowl. Cool slightly.

2. Add bread, adjust seasonings, and toss well. Add wine or stock and egg and gently mix together with your hands. Stuff bird cavity and roast immediately.

## Variations:

### Chestnut Stuffing with Cornbread and Dried Apricots

Prepare recipe, omitting sausage. Substitute 6 tablespoons butter for the olive oil. Add 3 tablespoons brandy to onions and celery when they are tender, along with ½ cup chopped dried apricots. Simmer until brandy evaporates. Add chestnuts, substitute rosemary for the sage, and stir in ¼ cup minced parsley. Substitute stale or toasted cornbread for the white bread.

### Chestnut Stuffing with Wild Rice and Pearl Onions

Makes enough stuffing for 1 small turkey (about 14 pounds)

- 1½ cups wild rice
- Chicken stock to cook rice
- Dry sherry or white wine to cook rice
- Salt and black pepper
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 pounds pearl onions, peeled
- 3 cups roasted, peeled, chopped Italian chestnuts
- Leaves from 4 sprigs fresh thyme, chopped

1. Cook wild rice according to package directions, using 3 parts chicken stock, 1 part sherry or wine and salt and pepper.

2. In a large, heavy skillet over medium-high heat, melt butter and add oil. Add onions and sauté until golden, about 3 to 5 minutes. Add chestnuts and thyme, and cook, stirring, for another 2 minutes. Add wild rice and more stock if mixture seems dry. Adjust seasonings.

3. Fluff stuffing with fork before loosely filling cavity of the bird; roast immediately.