

Celebrate With Healthy Gifts From The Heart

(NAPSA)—Gifts we create ourselves, drawing on our time, talent and thoughtfulness, can be more special than things purchased.

This year, head to your kitchen and create gifts that will reach loved ones through their hearts and stomachs, like snack mixes, casseroles and crackers. Your kitchen pantry holds a treasure trove of materials perfect for putting together festive treats, and a homemade gift will let your creativity shine through. There's nothing more thoughtful than a homemade party mix packaged in a dressed-up jelly jar, or a loaf of shortbread and your favorite spread packaged together with a recipe and a set of hors d'oeuvre plates.

A gift from the heart can be good for the heart as well. When choosing recipes, add a healthy twist by selecting items with a low sodium content. Web sites like www.mrstdash.com offer several low-sodium gift ideas that taste so great, your friends and family won't even believe they're healthy! Once you have chosen the goodies you want to prepare, remember that the ultimate touch for these gifts is their presentation. Decorative jars, tins and festive wrapping paper go a long way in making a homemade gift memorable.

"The American Heart Association recommends limiting sodium intake to 2,400 mg daily, but on average, many Americans consume nearly twice that amount," said Diane Quagliani, a Chicago-based registered dietitian. "A healthy homemade gift is a great way to help your friends and family watch their sodium intake and show them how much you care."

A snack mix made with Mrs. Dash seasoning makes a great gift for just about anyone. For more "giftable" recipes, such as Spiced Pecans or Cheddar Shortbread, log on to www.mrstdash.com.



EXTRA SPICY HOLIDAY MIX

Serves: 16

Preparation Time: 5 minutes

Cooking time: 20 minutes

Ease of Preparation: easy

4 cups (1L) wheat squares cereal

¹/₄ cup (60mL) unsalted butter

1 Tablespoon (15mL) Mrs. Dash® Extra Spicy Seasoning Blend

1 Tablespoon (15mL) Mrs. Dash® Garlic and Herb Seasoning Blend

2 cups (480mL) shelled pumpkin seeds

1 cup (240mL) sun dried cranberries

Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C).

Melt butter and add Mrs. Dash® Extra Spicy and Garlic and Herb Seasoning Blends.

Place cereal and pumpkin seeds in large bowl. Toss with Mrs. Dash® mixture. Place on cookie sheet and bake in oven 15-20 minutes or until cereal is crisp.

Remove from oven and toss with sun dried cranberries.

Nutritional Information
Per Serving: Actual Serving Size: 1.3 ounces (35.8g) Calories: 167; Sodium: 70 mg; Total Fat: 11 g; Potassium: 168 mg; Saturated Fat: 3 g; Carbohydrates: 15 g; Unsaturated Fat: 7 g; Fiber: 2 g; Trans Fat: 0 g; Protein: 5 g; Cholesterol: 8 mg.