

# Roasted Italian Chestnuts: Instant Coziness For The Holidays

(NAPSA)—Few images are more evocative of holiday cheer than chestnuts roasting on an open fire. The song is one of the first that carolers sing, yet the days when families actually gathered round the fire eating chestnuts have gone the way of many other wonderful traditions.

This season, why not revive the simple custom of roasting chestnuts with your loved ones? You can buy fresh, imported Italian chestnuts—the sweetest, most flavorful of the nuts—in the produce section of your supermarket all winter long. And preparing them is easy.

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 and roast at 400°F. for 15 to 20 mins. Traditionalists with fireplaces can shake them over the crackling flames in an old-fashioned perforated roasting pan. Either way, be sure to breathe deeply as they roast, and their compelling, autumnal scent fills the air.

While peeling and eating freshly roasted chestnuts is one of the great pleasures of the winter season, leftover nuts are a delightful by-product. Their gentle crunch and nutty sweetness adds a festive note to all kinds of recipes—everything from soup to desserts.

## Chestnut and Apple Soup

*Serves 8 to 10*

- ¼ cup butter
- 1 red onion, chopped
- 1 carrot, chopped
- 1 stalk celery, chopped
- 1 Granny Smith apple, peeled and chopped

### Did You Know?

- Chestnuts have the lowest fat content of all nuts.
- Most chestnuts are imported from Europe. The majority of imported chestnuts, and those of the best quality, come from Italy.
- Roasted, peeled leftover chestnuts can be frozen for up to 6 months. 



Italian chestnuts just off the tree. Prickly on the outside, sweet within.

- 1 bay leaf
- 2 pounds chestnuts, roasted and peeled
- Salt and black pepper
- ¼ cup brandy
- 2 quarts vegetable stock, plus additional stock (warmed) to thin the soup

1. Melt butter in a medium soup pot over medium-high heat. Add onion, carrot, celery, apple and bay leaf and cook, stirring, until very soft, about 20 mins. Add chestnuts to pot and continue to sauté for 15 minutes. Season with salt.

2. Add brandy and stir until liquid is absorbed. Add stock, bring to a simmer, and cook until chestnuts are very soft, about 25 to 30 minutes.

3. Remove bay leaf from the soup. Use an immersion blender to purée the soup (or, purée the soup in batches in a standing blender or food processor) and pass through a medium strainer into a pot or tureen for serving. Thin with additional warm stock if necessary.

## Chestnut and Sweet Potato Purée

*Serves 8 to 10 as a side dish*

- 1 pound sweet potatoes, peeled and quartered
- 1½ pounds chestnuts, roasted and peeled
- 2 tablespoons butter
- Salt and black pepper
- Freshly grated nutmeg
- Heavy cream to taste

1. Place sweet potatoes in a large pot and cover with 1 inch of cold water. Salt water and bring to a boil, uncovered. Simmer for 10 minutes, reducing heat if necessary. Add chestnuts and continue to cook until chestnuts and potatoes are soft, about 25 minutes.

2. Drain and transfer to food processor or food mill. Add butter, salt, pepper, and nutmeg. Puree until smooth. Stir in cream and serve hot, or reheat in microwave.

## Chestnut Chocolate Bark

- 2 cups roasted, peeled, chopped chestnuts
- 12 ounces bittersweet chocolate, chopped
- ¾ cup golden raisins, dried tart cherries, or cubed dried apricots

1. Preheat oven to 375° F. Line a 10 by 15-inch rimmed baking sheet with aluminum foil and set aside. Lay the chestnuts in a single layer on another rimmed baking sheet and toast, stirring once or twice, until golden and fragrant, about 10 to 15 minutes. Transfer to a wire rack to cool.

2. Meanwhile, place about two-thirds of the chocolate in the top of a double boiler or in a metal bowl. Place over (not in) a pot of simmering water (not boiling) and let the chocolate melt slowly while stirring. Transfer the double boiler top or bowl to a trivet and add remaining chocolate. Stir until melted.

3. In a large bowl, combine chocolate and chestnuts. Scrape mixture onto the foil-lined pan and spread evenly into a square that is slightly smaller than the pan. Sprinkle raisins or dried fruit over the top. Let cool until firm, at least 4 hours. Break bark into pieces and serve immediately or store in an airtight container for up to 3 weeks.