IN A NUTSHELL

History of the Peanut

The peanut, or more formally Arachis hypogaea, has an interesting history of cultivation in the United States.

Peanuts were not grown extensively in the United States in the 1700 and 1800s. Though commercial peanut farms existed, peanuts were not a popular crop as growing and harvesting techniques were slow and difficult. Until the Civil War, the peanut was a regional food associated with the southern United States.

Then, by the end of the nineteenth century, improvements in peanut processing techniques and the development of equipment for production, harvesting and shelling contributed to the expansion of the peanut industry.

Concurrently, an American scientist named George Washington Carver was researching alternative crops to cotton for southern U.S. farmers. Peanuts became an important focus of his research. He discovered improvements in horticulture and developed more than 300 uses for peanuts – from salted peanuts, to shoe polish, to shaving cream!

Today, farms in the United States typically produce between 3 billion and 5 billion pounds of peanuts annually, and there are approximately 25,000 peanut farmers in the major producing regions (Georgia, Texas, Alabama, North Carolina, Florida, Virginia, and Oklahoma.) Canada is one of the largest consumers of quality USA peanuts, accounting for one third of the total export.

This mighty legume is also fondly referred to as earthnut, ground nut and goober pea.
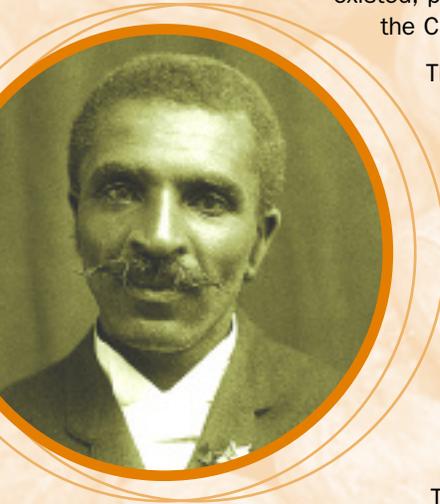
George Washington Carver

NUTTY RECIPE

Soba Vegetable Noodle Salad

INGREDIENTS:

1	each red and yellow pepper, cut into thin julienne strips	1
1	small handful of snow peas, cut into thin julienne strips	1
1	large carrot, coarsely grated	1
2	green onions, thinly sliced	2
1 1/2 cups	diced pineapple, about 1/3 pineapple	375 mL
1/4 cup	peanut butter, at room temperature	50 mL
1 1/2 tbsp	rice wine vinegar	22 mL
1 tbsp	each lime juice and soy sauce	15 mL
1 tbsp	finely minced ginger	15 mL
2 tsp	sesame oil	10 mL
1/2 to 1 tsp	hot Chinese chili garlic sauce	2 to 5 mL
8 oz	soba noodles	250 g
1/2 cup	shredded fresh mint or chopped coriander	125 mL
1/4 cup	USA quality peanuts	50 mL

DIRECTIONS:

1. Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Meanwhile, prepare vegetables and pineapple and place in a large bowl.

2. In a food processor, whirl peanut butter with vinegar, lime juice, soy sauce, ginger, sesame oil, and 1/2 tsp (2 mL) chili garlic sauce. Turn into a bowl. Whisk in 2 to 5 tbsp (25 to 75 mL) water depending on thickness of peanut butter (dressing should be thick).

3. When water boils, add soba. Cook according to package directions until al dente. Drain and rinse in cold running water until no longer hot. Drain very well and pat dry. Place in bowl with vegetable mixture. Toss with dressing then mint or coriander. Mix to combine. Taste and for a spicier salad add remaining chili sauce. Sprinkle each serving with peanuts and a wedge of lime for squeezing over top.

PREP TIME: 15 MINUTES
COOKING TIME: 4 MINUTES
MAKES 4 – 6 SERVINGS

PEANUT BUREAU OF CANADA
LE BUREAU CANADIEN DE L'ARACHIDE

IN A NUTSHELL

Overall quality of what you eat really matters

Based on the largest meta-analysis ever undertaken of dietary factors in relation to coronary heart disease (CHD), a research team at McMaster University in Ontario found a causal link between a small number of dietary factors – nut consumption amongst them – and protection from CHD.[1]

Their systematic evidence review had rigorous inclusion criteria: some 200 studies between 1950 and 2007 were reviewed where subjects were followed for at least one year. It looked for a cause and effect relationship for various foods and CHD and also at the relationship to CHD risks of eating patterns such as the traditional Mediterranean dietary pattern featuring fruit and vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts, fish, modest amounts of red meat and dairy products and using mainly unsaturated fat from olive oil.

It is well established that peanuts can be identified along with other legumes and nuts in the "Mediterranean pyramid" eating pattern – which groups nuts, legumes, fruit, vegetables, grains, seeds, and olive oil together to form the largest part of the pyramid. This approach to food consumption is increasingly promoted to consumers by health professionals.[2]

The Canadian team's findings from their meta-analysis singled out vegetables and nuts as well as the Mediterranean eating pattern along with unsaturated fatty acids as strongly associated with reduced CHD risk. The evidence also pointed to higher heart disease risks of exposure to "Western" eating patterns featuring a high-glycemic load from foods containing refined carbohydrates and sugars, as well as saturated fats from red and processed meats and higher fat dairy products and trans-fats. The Mediterranean eating pattern was a convenient way to help consumers avoid these higher risk foods.

Know your peanuts

There are four basic types of peanuts, each with a distinct size and flavour.

- Runner Peanuts represent 75% of US peanut production. Runners are often used for peanut butter.

- Virginia Peanuts have the largest kernel and are frequently roasted and eaten as in-shells. When shelled, larger kernels are sold as salted peanuts.

- Spanish Peanuts have a smaller kernel and are covered in a reddish-brown skin. Significant quantities are used for salted nuts, peanut candy and peanut butter.

- Valencia Peanuts are sweet and typically have three or more small kernels in a pod. Valencia are best enjoyed roasted and sold in-shell.

QUESTIONS? COMMENTS?

Feel free to contact us at info@peanutbureau.ca with any questions or feedback you may have about this issue of **IN A NUTSHELL.**

1. Mente A et al. "A systematic review of the evidence supporting a causal link between dietary factors and coronary heart disease". Archives of Internal Medicine 2009;169(7):659-669

2. Oldways Preservation Trust, Mediterranean Diet Pyramid (updated 2008), www.oldwayspt.org/med_pyramid.html accessed 14-5-09; Antinoro L. "Mediterranean eating: a myriad of benefits" www.intelihealth.com/IH/ihtIH/WSIHW000/35320/35327/1008054.html?d=dmtHMSContent accessed 19-5-09

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