



SIMPLY GOOD FOOD

Almonds

Centuries ago, almonds are said to have originated in ancient China or the Middle East. Plantings of this crop moved westward to the Mediterranean region, where Spain and Italy became major almond producers. In the middle 1700's the Franciscan Padres brought almonds to California to grace their missions.

Use: The almond is very versatile and can be used as both an ingredient and a garnish. Use it to add texture and crunch to poultry, fish, rice, sauces, vegetables, salads, breads, desserts, cakes, pastry filings, and candy.

Storage: Store unshelled nuts in a cool place for up to six months. Keep shelled nuts in an airtight container in the refrigerator for several months or in the freezer for up to six months.

Nutritional Information: Almonds contain high quality vegetable protein, polyunsaturated fats, complex carbohydrates and fiber. Almonds are an excellent source of Vitamin E, riboflavin, iron, phosphorus, magnesium and copper. They are cholesterol free, high in fiber and contain less than 4 mg. sodium per ounce. One serving is 1 ounce (about 20-28 kernels) and has 170 calories.

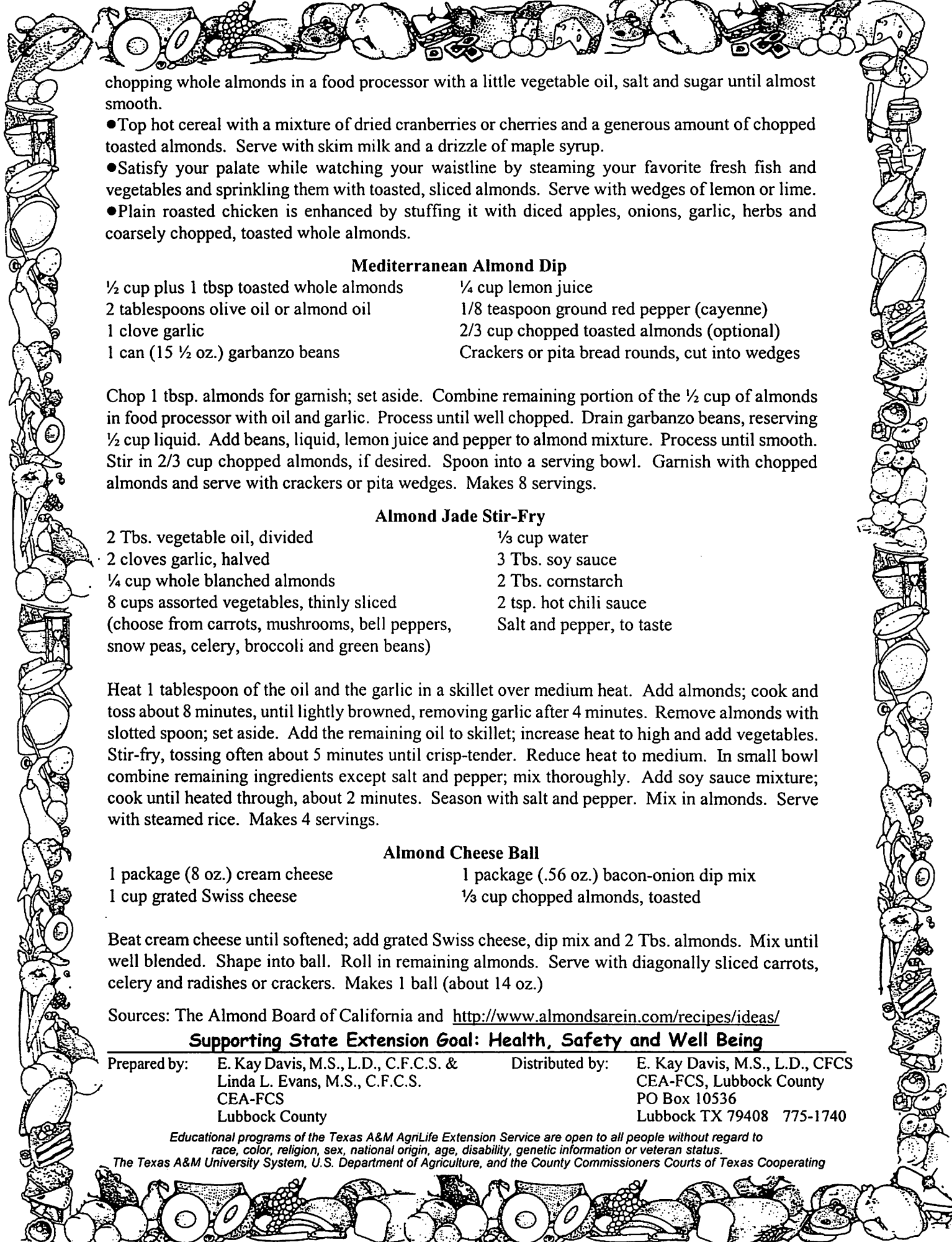
Did You Know?

- California is the only place in North America where almonds are grown commercially.
- Almond orchards must have trees of more than one variety because almonds are not self-pollinating—bees must do that work.
- There are many types of almonds but the major varieties grown in California number only five.
- Almond shells are not wasted. They are sent to commercial buyers for conversion into charcoal briquets or turned into energy by fueling cogeneration plants.

Health Matters: Almonds either roasted, raw, or in a butter form reduced LDL cholesterol in men and women with high cholesterol blood levels. Almond consumption may provide a measure of protection from the risk of developing colon cancer. Almonds have the ability to reduce surges in blood sugar following eating, thereby decreasing both insulin secretion and fat oxidation stress—two factors believed to be involved in the development of heart disease and diabetes. This research is ongoing.

Tasty Ideas: Whether you are serving salad or soup, pasta or poultry, almonds are a natural and healthful addition to any menu. Try these heart-healthy tips:

- Make “nut crumbs” by adding whole toasted almonds to the food processor and pulsing on and off until the almonds are coarsely ground. Use them as a topping for casseroles, or sprinkle on pasta and grain dishes.
- Savory seasoned almonds are the perfect topping for your favorite side or main dish. In a nonstick skillet over medium-low heat, toss whole or slivered almonds in a small amount of vegetable oil until golden. Add your choice of dried herbs, then sprinkle over salads, vegetables and pasta.
- Almond butter is a nutritious and hearty topping for bagels or muffins. And, it is easy to make by



chopping whole almonds in a food processor with a little vegetable oil, salt and sugar until almost smooth.

- Top hot cereal with a mixture of dried cranberries or cherries and a generous amount of chopped toasted almonds. Serve with skim milk and a drizzle of maple syrup.

- Satisfy your palate while watching your waistline by steaming your favorite fresh fish and vegetables and sprinkling them with toasted, sliced almonds. Serve with wedges of lemon or lime.

- Plain roasted chicken is enhanced by stuffing it with diced apples, onions, garlic, herbs and coarsely chopped, toasted whole almonds.

Mediterranean Almond Dip

½ cup plus 1 tbsp toasted whole almonds

2 tablespoons olive oil or almond oil

1 clove garlic

1 can (15 ½ oz.) garbanzo beans

¼ cup lemon juice

1/8 teaspoon ground red pepper (cayenne)

2/3 cup chopped toasted almonds (optional)

Crackers or pita bread rounds, cut into wedges

Chop 1 tbsp. almonds for garnish; set aside. Combine remaining portion of the ½ cup of almonds in food processor with oil and garlic. Process until well chopped. Drain garbanzo beans, reserving ½ cup liquid. Add beans, liquid, lemon juice and pepper to almond mixture. Process until smooth. Stir in 2/3 cup chopped almonds, if desired. Spoon into a serving bowl. Garnish with chopped almonds and serve with crackers or pita wedges. Makes 8 servings.

Almond Jade Stir-Fry

2 Tbs. vegetable oil, divided

2 cloves garlic, halved

¼ cup whole blanched almonds

8 cups assorted vegetables, thinly sliced

(choose from carrots, mushrooms, bell peppers, snow peas, celery, broccoli and green beans)

⅓ cup water

3 Tbs. soy sauce

2 Tbs. cornstarch

2 tsp. hot chili sauce

Salt and pepper, to taste

Heat 1 tablespoon of the oil and the garlic in a skillet over medium heat. Add almonds; cook and toss about 8 minutes, until lightly browned, removing garlic after 4 minutes. Remove almonds with slotted spoon; set aside. Add the remaining oil to skillet; increase heat to high and add vegetables. Stir-fry, tossing often about 5 minutes until crisp-tender. Reduce heat to medium. In small bowl combine remaining ingredients except salt and pepper; mix thoroughly. Add soy sauce mixture; cook until heated through, about 2 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Mix in almonds. Serve with steamed rice. Makes 4 servings.

Almond Cheese Ball

1 package (8 oz.) cream cheese

1 cup grated Swiss cheese

1 package (.56 oz.) bacon-onion dip mix

⅓ cup chopped almonds, toasted

Beat cream cheese until softened; add grated Swiss cheese, dip mix and 2 Tbs. almonds. Mix until well blended. Shape into ball. Roll in remaining almonds. Serve with diagonally sliced carrots, celery and radishes or crackers. Makes 1 ball (about 14 oz.)

Sources: The Almond Board of California and <http://www.almondsarein.com/recipes/ideas/>

Supporting State Extension Goal: Health, Safety and Well Being

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