

THIS HOLIDAY, GIVE THE GIFT OF good eats

Food gifts at holiday time are a great way to personalize and share homemade goodies. While sugary treats like cookies and candy are often the tradition, here are a few creative gifts to give that are healthy, simple to make and oh-so tasty.

1.

Olive Tapenade (spread)

- ½ cup kalamata olives, pitted
- ¼ cup green olives, pitted
- 4 anchovy filets
- 1 tsp. garlic, minced

- 1 tbsp. capers, well drained
- 1 tbsp. lemon juice
- 1 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil

Combine all ingredients, except the olive oil in a food processor. Combine ingredients to coarse texture, then drizzle in the olive oil with the motor running.

Refrigerate for at least 1 hour for flavors to develop. Tapenade will keep for about 1 week in the refrigerator. Serve on crackers, lightly toasted french bread or foccacia. Spread on pizza, bruchetta or sandwiches. Makes 1 cup.



2.

Spiced Toasted Almonds

- 1 tbsp. dried thyme leaves
- 1 tsp. kosher or sea salt
- ¼ tsp. cayenne pepper (or to taste)

- 2 tsp. canola oil
- 2 cups whole unblanched almonds
- Canola oil spray

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. In large, shallow bowl, combine thyme, salt, pepper and oil. Set aside.

Place nuts in medium bowl. While tossing with fork, lightly spray with canola oil so all surfaces are coated.

Lightly coat baking sheet with canola oil spray. Turn nuts onto sheet and spread evenly across surface. Place baking sheet in center of oven. Toast until nuts are lightly browned and fragrant – about 8 mins. Occasionally, shake pan to shift nuts and prevent scorching.

Remove from oven and immediately add hot nuts to spice mixture. Stir for a few minutes to coat nuts thoroughly. Taste and adjust seasonings. Serve warm or at room temperature. Nuts can be stored sealed for up to 2 weeks.

Source: American Institute for Cancer Research

3.

Chocolate Balls (no baking required)

- 1 cup peanut butter
- 1/3 cup honey
- 2 tsp. unsweetened cocoa powder

- ½ cup raisins
- ¾ cup unsweetened shredded coconut, divided
- ½ cup chocolate chips

Mix peanut butter, honey and cocoa powder until well combined. Stir in raisins and 1/8 cup of the coconut. Stir in chocolate chips. Refrigerate overnight.

Place remaining coconut into bowl. Using a spoon, scoop small heaps of the peanut mixture from the bowl; roll into 1¼-inch balls. Rolling the dough in your hands will warm the dough and shape the balls. Roll each finished ball in more coconut. Arrange the balls on a plate, cover loosely with plastic wrap and refrigerate at least 30 mins. Makes 2 dozen balls.

