

Christobel's Spicy Nuts Recipe

By Annabel Crabb

My sister found this recipe and it has been a favourite in our household ever since. I like to pump up the spices a little because I seem to find it impossible to stick to a recipe strictly, but you may not be that way inclined. I also add a good dose of chili flakes too for extra kick. Enjoy. This one is a keeper.



The secret ingredient in these nuts is curry powder. There – I've said it. I do love a recipe with a secret shame ingredient; there's a salad dressing Wendy and I were obsessed with for about two years that includes a tablespoon of tomato sauce. And curry powder here is absolutely perfect, even though it's part of Australia's cultural cringe.

The late, great Don Dunstan, former premier of South Australia, published his own cookbook while in office, and was especially scathing about curry powder: 'What seems to be accepted kitchen practice in this country is that a curry is a weak stew of meat, sometimes with vegetables and even fruit added to it, and flavoured with two teaspoons of a commercial curry powder,' he wrote. 'Having at an early age been fed with delicious goat and chicken curries at the table of my father's great friend Battan Singh, I carefully avoid these Australian insults to a great cuisine.' Well, sorry Don. It grieves me to report that these nuts are properly tasty; they are a staple gift item in my mum's repertoire, and I can still remember the first time I tasted them. Crispy, salty, sweet, and with that slightly elusive extra something.

Ingredients

1 egg white

850g (about 6 cups) nuts – my current thing is half blanched almonds and half raw cashews

55g castor (superfine) sugar

2 tsp fine salt

1 tsp freshly ground black pepper

1 tsp curry powder

½ tsp ground cumin

½ tsp ground cinnamon

½ tsp cayenne pepper

1 tsp chilli flakes

pinch of ground cloves

Method

Preheat the oven to 160C and line several baking trays with baking paper.

In a large bowl, whisk the egg white to stiff peaks, then add the nuts and stir through until they're evenly coated. Mix all the remaining ingredients together in a small bowl, then add to the bowl of nuts and stir until every nut is covered in the spice mixture.

Now tip the nuts onto your baking trays, spreading them out in a single layer – this is important, because a crowded nut is a soggy nut, and you want these babies to be crispy. If in doubt, grab another tray.

Bake until they are a nice deep golden colour – this should take around 15–30 minutes. As they cool, their spicy coating will set hard and crunchy.

Makes about 900g

To transport: Once you've given these a thorough sampling, pop them in a sealed container quick-smart – moisture is your enemy here. Packed into jars, spicy nuts make very nice presents. And I am certain even Don Dunstan would've secretly liked them.

Recipe from Special Delivery, by Annabel Crabb and Wendy Sharpe