



WALNUTS NEW PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

A White Paper from the California Walnut Commission



walnuts.org



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Walnuts are a versatile ingredient with applications throughout food and beverage categories, ranging from plant-based meat alternatives to snack bars. Recent developments in health, food science and flavor research have caused product developers around the world to examine how walnuts can be used in new product formulations.

In the last year alone, we've seen new walnut-based products that mimic ground beef in frozen entrées, walnut spreads that deliver flavor and omega-3 fatty acids, and clean label food bars that use walnuts for their whole food benefits, flavor and texture. In these products, walnuts provide functional, flavor and nutritional benefits.

The California Walnut Commission developed this Product Development Guide to help inspire your next *made-with-walnuts* creation. The guide is broken down into product applications and details the driving category trends and why walnuts satisfy these trends. We also spotlight some of our favorite made-with-walnuts products in each category.

Read, enjoy and reach out to kseiz@walnuts.org if you have any questions about incorporating walnuts into your next product development.

Table of Contents

1 Bakery Foods	3
2 Plant-Based Foods	5
3 Granola/Trail Mix	6
4 Bars	8
5 Oatmeal/Cereal	10
6 Snacks	11
7 Nut Butter	12
8 Dairy	14

1 BAKERY FOODS

Walnuts have found a home in bakery foods for hundreds of years. How can you have banana bread, chocolate chip cookies or brownies without the perfect crunch of walnuts? However, walnuts' use in bakery foods goes beyond sweet goods. Think pie crusts and artisan bread inclusions. Or what about pan breads? In Japan, walnuts are a common inclusion in sandwich bread. Walnuts' versatility, flavor and texture make them ideal for countless bakery foods.

JUST THE STATS

According to [Snack Food & Wholesale Bakery](#), bakery food staples, such as breads, bagels and English muffins, all reported sales increases for the 52-week period ended April 19, 2020. Bagels showed the most growth during this period, recording a 5.2% increase in unit sales.

WHAT'S TRENDING: CLEAN LABEL INGREDIENTS

The bread and roll category has focused on clean label formulations for many years, but we're now starting to see sweet bakery goods shift product formulations to ingredients that are familiar to consumers and free of processed and artificial ingredients. This move has spurred product developers to focus on shortening ingredient listings as much as possible.

Pam Stauffer, global marketing programs manager for Cargill, said choosing the right ingredients "is an increasingly complex decision, especially in today's clean-label environment. Even in indulgent categories like sweet baked treats, consumers are looking for shorter ingredient statements, with names that they recognize."

“ Healthful indulgence has become the holy grail of food and beverage product development.

LEADERS OF THE PACK

Carrot Cake

HONEYCUT KITCHEN
LOS ANGELES, CA

This Carrot Cake has 11 grams of protein per serving and is baked with walnuts, cinnamon and carrots, topped with a lemon ginger whip. The gluten-free Carrot Cakes come in serving sizes of two carrot cakes, just in case one isn't enough.

Cranberry Walnut Biscotti

DELALLO
MOUNT PLEASANT, PA

For an extra-crispy, crunchy biscotti, turn to DeLallo's Biscotti Cranberry Walnut variety. Cut and packed by hand, this biscotti (which translates as "twice baked") combines sweet and chewy dried cranberries with crunchy chopped walnuts. The Cranberry Walnut variety is produced in small batches via an authentic Italian recipe that is all-natural and contains no trans fat or preservatives.



WHAT'S TRENDING: PREMIUM BAKERY FOODS

COVID-19 has put an emphasis on home baking, causing consumers throughout the United States to discover an appreciation for crafting bakery foods. The category's newfound respect is expected to positively impact premium bakery food sales as the pandemic subsides and consumers start to place a premium on upscale, artisan-crafted breads, pastries and sweet goods.

WHY USE WALNUTS? FLAVOR AND TEXTURE

Walnuts have been a mainstay in the bakery foods category in products ranging from banana bread to walnut chocolate chip cookies. And for good reason. Nothing beats the subtle nutty flavor and not-too-soft/not-too-hard texture of walnuts. However, product developers should look outside these traditional categories and capitalize on walnuts' potential in products such as food bars and pan breads. For evidence of walnuts' potential in pan breads, check out the Japanese market where walnut inclusions in traditional white pan breads are very popular.

WHY USE WALNUTS? FAMILIARITY

Consumers are familiar with walnuts and most likely have them in their refrigerator or pantry. This makes them a valuable ingredient in bakery food formulations, where all-natural, whole ingredients are favored by consumers. For product developers, walnuts are available in multiple piece sizes ranging from half-pieces to walnut meal. The versatility of piece size allows walnuts to be used in multiple manners, from decorative on outside of products to functional within bakery foods.

WHY USE WALNUTS? HEALTHFUL INDULGENCE

Healthful indulgence has become the holy grail of food and beverage product development. Manufacturers in almost every category are trying to create great-tasting products loaded with nutritional benefits. Walnuts deliver both essential nutrition and indulgence, and are easily incorporated into countless food products. In a 2019 consumer survey, taste was cited as the number one reason for consuming walnuts. In addition, 90% of consumers recognize walnuts as a nutritious food and 78% said the health benefits of walnuts positively impacted their purchase decision.

 [View our Chocolate Chip Walnut Cookie formulation here](#)

BAKERY FOODS LEADERS OF THE PACK

Cookie Bites

FEARLESS KETO
NASHVILLE, TN

Made with California walnut flour, Fearless Keto Cookie Bites are a keto-friendly cookie with 1 gram of net carbs and 3 grams of protein, perfect for a daily guilt-free indulgence. The company's goal when crafting the formula for Cookie Bites was to "transform the ordinary mini-cookie into a no-sugar, low carb, satiating power snack with just the right amount of healthy fat, nut flour and whey protein to trigger the brain's 'hunger control' center."



2 PLANT-BASED FOODS

With walnuts, plant-based food and beverage manufacturers can mimic products such as ground beef and alternative milks without excess ingredients and fillers. The next generation of plant-based foods will focus on clean label products, in which walnuts can play a starring role due to their subtle nuttiness and exceptional texture.

JUST THE STATS

[The Good Food Institute](#) reports that investors have infused more than \$16 billion into U.S. plant-based and cell-based meat companies in the past 10 years. Projected growth of plant-based protein and meat alternatives is predicted to increase from \$4.6 billion in 2018 to \$85 billion in 2030. Long-term success and repeat purchases are predicted to come down to taste, texture and ingredients.

WHAT'S TRENDING: MORE CONSUMERS GOING FLEXITARIAN

A recent California Walnuts trend report shows that plant-based food product development has been rapid. And it's not just vegetarians that product developers are targeting. An increasing number of consumers are choosing flexitarian diets which supplement, but do not completely replace, some meat products with plant-based options. Flexitarian followers are especially focused on flavor and texture as they seek out plant-based options.

WHAT'S TRENDING: CLEAN LABELS

There's no denying the booming popularity of plant-based foods. However, consumers are starting to doubt the ingredients used to create some popular meat alternatives on the marketplace. Do you know what leghemoglobin is? Does methylcellulose belong on a clean label plant-based food? The next generation of plant-based foods will focus on clean label ingredient listings that still maintain flavor and texture.

WHY USE WALNUTS? CLEAN LABEL FLAVOR AND NUTRITION

Walnuts are a wonderful ingredient that helps make a plant-based product taste great while maintaining a clean label. [DuPont Nutrition & Health](#) conducted a study that found 52% of U.S. consumers are eating more plant-based foods because it makes them feel healthier. Walnuts provide unique nutritional value, as they are the only nut with an excellent source of essential plant-based omega-3 alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), with 2.5 grams per ounce. When used in plant-based alternatives, such as walnut butters or walnut milk, food manufacturers can promote the ALA omega-3 fatty acid content of a product and distinguish it from others on the market.

 [View our Walnut Chorizo Tacos formulation here](#)

LEADERS OF THE PACK

Meaty Walnut Ravioli

EAT NICE FOODS
PHILADELPHIA, PA

Eat Nice Foods produces a Meaty Walnut Ravioli that uses walnuts and sun-dried tomatoes for a meaty bite and taste. [Vegan Essentials](#) called this product luxurious and decadent, and said it will “rock your world, especially in a creamy or cheezy-style sauce.” Each 9 oz. bag of frozen ravioli is ready in only 7-10 minutes, and along with walnuts, ingredients include garlic, olive oil and sun-dried tomatoes.

California Veggie Burger

AMY'S KITCHEN
PETALUMA, CA

Amy's Kitchen made-with-walnuts California Veggie Burger is a plant-based patty that is dairy-free and soy-free. Amy's says that the search for the “perfect” veggie burger was one of trial and error, recipe after recipe, until this one took shape. Toasted walnuts are mixed with mushrooms, onions, celery, carrots, oats, garlic and potatoes. For consumers looking for that protein and fiber boost, one patty contains 6 grams of protein and 4 grams of dietary fiber.



WHY USE WALNUTS? FAMILIAR, YET UNIQUE

With a large amount of similar products in the market and competition for the shelf space reaching saturation levels, walnuts are a great plant-based protein to distinguish a product while delivering savory flavor and meat-like texture. Walnuts satisfy both flavor and texture demands and are popping up in delicious “chorizo” tacos as a replacement for ground beef, as well as in burgers and bowls. Walnut veggie shepherd’s pie, walnuts topped on pizza and plant-based walnut crumbles also have been making their mark.

Walnut Crumbles

AZAR
EL PASO, TX

Azar’s Walnut Crumbles include walnuts, chorizo seasoning and sunflower oil to create a plant-based version of taco meat that can be used in tacos, in burritos or on top of nachos. Change the spices to Italian seasonings, and you have a product that can go on frozen pizza or in frozen lasagna.

3 GRANOLA/TRAIL MIX

Walnuts have always been the perfect addition to granolas and trail mixes due to their flavor and texture. However, food manufacturers are now capitalizing on the plant-based omega-3 fatty acid content of walnuts by launching new lines of functional granolas.

JUST THE STATS

A [Nielsen study](#) found that snacks with all-natural ingredients were “rated very important” by 45% of global respondents. And market research company [Hartman Group](#) found that the desire for convenience is a trend that is shining through in terms of packaging demands. Consumers are looking for resealable packs (43%) and single-serving packs (27%), something that fits perfectly with the granola and trail mix categories.

WHAT’S TRENDING: GLUTEN-FREE GRANOLA

The 2020 Fancy Food Show spotlighted some major trends in the granola category, mainly gluten-free granola. Eliminating the gluten from granola has placed a spotlight on the role nuts and alternative grains can play in the granola space.

WHAT’S TRENDING: BOLD, UNIQUE FLAVOR COMBINATIONS

The basic trail mix recipe has been around for decades and includes a mixture of nuts, seeds and dried fruits. However, today’s trail mix has a much more expansive view of ingredients and flavors. [Produce Business](#) reported that today’s trail mix “can be sweet and savory, bold and spicy or ethnically inspired.”

LEADERS OF THE PACK

Grain Free Granola

WILDWAY
SAN ANTONIO, TX

Wildway’s Grain Free Granola Dark Chocolate Strawberry variety is part of the company’s We Rise lineup of seasonal granola. It blends walnuts with unsweetened cacao powder, sea salt, vanilla bean and dried strawberries. The granola is made with no added sugars, oil, extracts or flavorings.



 [View our Walnut Berry Granola formulation here](#)

WHY USE WALNUTS? OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS

Walnuts are the only nut that provides an excellent amount of plant-based omega-3 ALA, with 2.5 grams per ounce. Omega-3s are essential fatty acids that humans need to incorporate through our diet, as our body does not make them on its own. Walnuts are unique among nuts as they are primarily composed of polyunsaturated fatty acids, whereas most other nuts contain mostly monounsaturated fats. As a result, walnuts are the only nut that offers an excellent source of plant-based omega-3 ALA.

WHY USE WALNUTS? NUTRITIOUS PROPERTIES

As a nutrient-dense food, walnuts are an excellent way to improve overall diet quality and are certified by the American Heart Association's Heart-Check mark*. One ounce of walnuts also contains 4 grams of protein and 2 grams of fiber and is a good source of magnesium and phosphorus.

WHY USE WALNUTS? FLAVOR PAIRINGS

California Walnut Commission worked with the Davis Sensory Institute to gain a greater understanding of what flavors paired best with walnuts. The results were diverse, ranging from dark chocolate and vanilla to sesame cayenne and cinnamon chai spice. In granolas and trail mixes, walnuts' subtle nutty flavor pairs with any ingredient ranging from sweet to savory to spicy.

WHY USE WALNUTS? TEXTURE

Walnuts have the perfect bite, being neither too hard nor too soft. This diverse texture is key in granola and trail mixes.

GRANOLA/TRAIL MIX LEADERS OF THE PACK

Daily Crunch

DIANE'S KITCHEN
NASHVILLE, TN

Diane's Kitchen has developed Cherry Berry Nut Medley as part of its Daily Crunch line. The mixes contain walnuts, dried blueberries and cherries, and they are keto and paleo friendly. The company soaks and slowly dehydrates the nuts for a uniquely crunchy snack that provides 2 grams of dietary fiber and 4 grams of protein per serving.

Maple Almond Grain Free Granola Clusters

ONE DEGREE ORGANIC FOODS
ABBOTSFORD, BC, CANADA

Launched in February 2020, new Maple Almond Grain Free Granola Clusters from One Degree Organic Foods is designed for consumers looking to avoid or lessen their gluten intake. Walnuts are included in the mix, along with raisins, coconut chips, cinnamon and vanilla. This granola cluster product provides 2 grams of dietary fiber and 3 grams of protein per serving.



*Supportive but not conclusive research shows that eating 1.5 ounces of walnuts per day, as part of a low saturated fat and low cholesterol diet and not resulting in increased caloric intake, may reduce the risk of coronary heart disease. (FDA) One ounce of walnuts offers 18g of total fat, 2.5g of monounsaturated fat, 13g of polyunsaturated fat including 2.5g of alpha-linolenic acid – the plant-based omega-3. Heart-Check Certification does not apply to scientific research by an organization other than the American Heart Association, unless expressly stated.

4 BARS

Food bars that are functional, provide all-day snacking and contain plant-based ingredients are trending with consumers. So why not grab a bar with an ingredient that satisfies everything that consumers want? Food bars with walnuts are gaining an advantage in the highly competitive category by being able to deliver taste, texture and nutritious properties via a single, whole ingredient.

JUST THE STATS

Consumers are looking to bars for a number of reasons, including in-between-meal snacks, meal replacements, pick-me-ups after a workout or an indulgence to get through the day. To further that point, market research firm [Mintel's](#) 2019 "Snack, Nutrition and Performance Bars" report cited the top most popular bars as snack (the most popular), meal replacement, nutrition, performance and weight loss. The food bar industry topped \$9.6 billion in 2019, according to Mintel, and bars fortified with protein and fiber were tops with consumers, along with those that provide plant protein and real food ingredients.

WHAT'S TRENDING: TASTE, TEXTURE, HEALTH

A recent California Walnuts [trend report](#) showed that there has been significant growth in bars made with walnuts because they tick off all of a product developer's boxes, including taste, texture and health properties. We predict that product development in the food bar category will continue to focus on whole food nutrition using ingredients such as walnuts. We also are expecting to see more savory bars hit store shelves as the category expands beyond the traditional morning or snacking eating occasion.

WHAT'S TRENDING: OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS

According to a [Buzzback survey](#), omega-3 fatty acids are a leading functional ingredient consumers are interested in trying in their food products. Bars have the ability to deliver plant-based omega-3s by incorporating walnuts.

WHAT'S TRENDING: NUT-DENSE BARS

Chock-full of good fats, nuts have gained the spotlight in bar formulations and show no signs of relinquishing it. Nut-dense bars have the ability to deliver satiety and nutrition with clean labels and whole ingredients.

LEADERS OF THE PACK

Paleo Bar Apple Pie

BLUE DINOSAUR
LITTLETON, CO

Blue Dinosaur's Paleo Bar Apple Pie variety is made with only five ingredients: walnuts, apples, dates, cinnamon and coconut oil. The plant-based bar is free of preservatives, gluten, grains, dairy and soy. The bar contains antioxidants, omega-3 fatty acids and monounsaturated fatty acids.



WHY USE WALNUTS? FLAVOR AND TEXTURE

From a flavor perspective, walnuts carry a unique and subtle nutty flavor profile that complements chocolate, vanilla, fruit and more. Walnuts also have the perfect bite, being neither too hard nor too soft. This is key in nut-dense bars that require a binder to keep all of the ingredients together. A hard or overly chewy bar will turn off customers even if the flavor is perfect. Walnuts deliver the flavor and the texture to make any bar a winner.

WHY USE WALNUTS? OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS

Walnuts are the only nut that provides an excellent amount of plant-based omega-3 ALA, with 2.5 grams per ounce. Walnuts are unique among nuts as they are primarily composed of polyunsaturated fatty acids, whereas most other nuts contain mostly monounsaturated fats.

WHY USE WALNUTS? NUTRITIOUS PROPERTIES

As a nutrient-dense food, walnuts are an excellent way to improve overall diet quality and are certified by the American Heart Association's Heart-Check mark*. One ounce of walnuts also contains 4 grams of protein and 2 grams of fiber and is a good source of magnesium and phosphorus.



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BARS

LEADERS OF THE PACK

Dark Chocolate Nut Entrée Bar

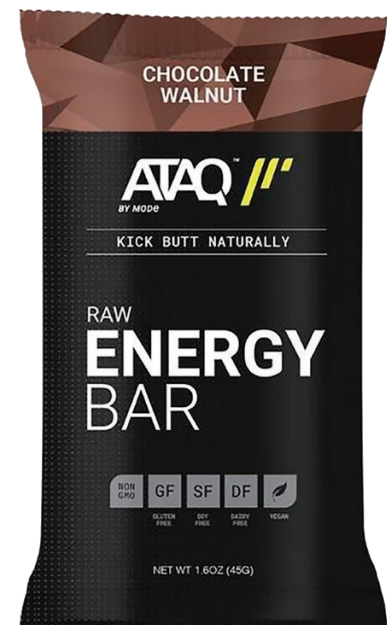
SOUTH BEACH DIET
FORT WASHINGTON, PA

A new addition to the weight loss category, South Beach Diet's Dark Chocolate Nut Entrée Bar is high in fiber and full of flavor. This nutty and sweet bar combines walnuts with dark chocolate and sea salt. It's a great way to get a fast, filling, on-the-go meal in a satisfying food entrée bar.

Chocolate Walnut Energy Bars

ATAQ
COSTA MESA, CA

Uniquely named as a raw energy bar, Chocolate Walnut is the newest food bar from ATAQ. These plant-based energy bars are made with walnuts and ginseng extract for an energy boost and fast recovery after workouts, according to the company. Other ingredients include dates, gluten-free oats, chocolate chips, unsweetened cocoa and sea salt, providing 4 grams of dietary fiber and 4 grams of protein per bar.



5 OATMEAL/CEREAL

Walnuts are delicious, and more and more cereal and oatmeal makers are adding better-for-you ingredients to get consumers' days off to a healthy start. Walnuts are perfect for cereal because they are an indulgent whole food with unique health properties. For example, walnuts are known to aid in heart-health*; they are predominantly composed of good fats, which play a role in a healthy diet; and they are the only nut that is a rich source of ALA, a plant-based essential omega-3 fatty acid that has positive anti-inflammatory effects.

JUST THE STATS

Packaged Facts' [Global Breakfast Cereals](#) report forecasts the global breakfast cereal market to expand 3% per year to \$40 billion by 2023. North America holds a significant portion of this category, amounting to \$12 billion of the \$35 billion market amassed in 2018.

WHAT'S TRENDING: ALL-DAY ENJOYMENT

Cereal has traditionally been eaten in bowl form, with milk and at home, but a [Mintel](#) report shows cereal moving beyond mornings and into something to be enjoyed during any time of the day and outside of the traditional bowl. Consumers are not only changing when they eat cereal and oatmeal, but also the way they eat cereal, allowing for further innovation in the category. More than two in five U.S. cereal consumers responded that they eat cereal as a snack at home at times other than breakfast. Almost one in five said they snack on cereal away from home, while 10% eat cereal on the go.

WHAT'S TRENDING: BETTER-FOR-YOU PRODUCTS

Traditionally, the cereal category has been divided into sugar-laden products for kids and more-healthy options for adults. Those lines are being blurred as more and more cereal manufacturers reformulate existing products to clean labels and remove artificial ingredients. Today, it's not uncommon to see whole grain cereals for kids and functional cereals for adults.

WHY USE WALNUTS? NUTRITION

Cereal and oatmeal makers are adding better-for-you ingredients into the mix, and walnuts help consumers start the day with plant-based omega-3 fatty acids, protein and more.

WHY USE WALNUTS? FLAVOR

Walnuts pair well with a variety of foods, from sweet to spicy to savory. As the cereal and oatmeal category evolves beyond typical sweet offerings, walnuts are poised to serve as a familiar flavor complement.

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LEADERS OF THE PACK

Real Medleys Apple Walnut

QUAKER
PURCHASE, NY

Quaker's Real Medleys Apple Walnut oatmeal makes breakfast a convenience with a single-serve package that just requires water. The oatmeal contains walnuts, dried apples, cranberries and 31 grams of whole grains per serving.

Great Grains Banana Nut Crunch

POST
LAKEVILLE, MN

Post's Great Grains Banana Nut Crunch includes walnuts, banana clusters and the traditional flakes that consumers know and love. This cereal is positioned for all-day enjoyment and can be eaten before a workout, while enjoying your favorite hobby and, of course, for breakfast. There are 6 grams of protein and 7 grams of dietary fiber per serving.



6 SNACKS

Snacking is as popular as ever, considering we're not that far removed from a time when three square meals a day was considered the standard. If consumers are intent on snacking so much, isn't it prudent to offer them some nutritious offerings that still deliver indulgence? Walnuts are in the unique position to be snacked on alone, with on-trend seasonings or as part of a made-with-walnuts snack food. This versatility, along with flavor, texture and health contributions, makes walnuts uniquely positioned to satisfy consumer cravings for healthy snacks that don't sacrifice flavor.

JUST THE STATS

Market data company IRI found that the snack nuts segment grew 1.8% for the 52 weeks ending May 19, 2019. And, according to the [International Food Information Council Foundation's 2019 Food & Health Survey](#), 97% of Americans snack at some point during the week.

WHAT'S TRENDING: MEAL REPLACEMENT

Shelves are lined with innovative, creative snacks that range from meal replacements to craving satisfiers. In these segments, nuts have stepped up as a high-caloric whole food that delivers nutritious properties.

WHAT'S TRENDING: FLAVOR COMBINATIONS

[Food Ingredients First](#) reports that snack launches containing nuts are seeing an increase of 9% average annual growth, with spicy nut flavors such as chili, wasabi and salsa barbecue trending. Tart flavors are also trending, with dried cherries, dark chocolate, dried blueberries and flavors with ethnic appeal leading the charge.

WHY USE WALNUTS? NUTRITIOUS PROPERTIES

Snacking for heart-health* is possible with walnuts, as they are certified by the American Heart Association's Heart-Check mark*. One ounce of walnuts also contains 4 grams of protein and 2 grams of fiber and is a good source of magnesium and phosphorus.

 [View our Carolina BBQ Walnuts formulation here](#)

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LEADERS OF THE PACK

Gourmet Walnuts

CRAZY GO NUTS
CLOVIS, CA

Crazy Go Nuts has expanded its line of all-natural gourmet walnuts with a large variety of unique flavors, including Rosemary Pink Salt, Oatmeal Cookie, Buffalo, Maple, Banana, Garlic Parmesan, Eggnog, Pumpkin Spice and Sea Salt. Each variety contains 4 grams of protein per serving.

Habanero Flavored Walnuts

THE NUTTY GOURMET
HUGHSON, CA

This spicy snack is sure to leave your taste buds tingling with the heat from habanero seasoning. The subtle nuttiness and sweetness of walnuts pair perfectly with habanero to create an indulgent snack that is grown in California.

Dark Chocolate Nut Crunch Clusters

DIAMOND OF CALIFORNIA
STOCKTON, CA

Diamond of California's new line of seasoned walnuts come in multiple varieties, including Hot Honey, Teriyaki & Wasabi, Salted Dark Chocolate, Sweet Maple, Himalayan Pink Salt, Chile Lime, Hickory Smoked Bacon and Cinnamon Churro.



WHY USE WALNUTS? FLAVOR

Seasoned walnuts have exploded in popularity among consumers because of their texture and ability to complement sweet, savory and spicy profiles. On the market, we're seeing a host of seasonings used in walnuts, ranging from rosemary to espresso to pumpkin spice. Seasoned walnuts have proven to be the perfect heart-healthy* snack. Walnuts provide the perfect bite for a whole food snack – they're not too hard, nor soft, and their natural contours create a dynamic eating experience when seasonings are used.



7 NUT BUTTER

WB&J sandwich, anyone? No matter how you spread it, walnut butter is a creamy and tasty food. It offers versatility in a market trending toward nutritious products that have unique flavor profiles, clean labels, all-natural ingredients and convenience. Walnut butter can be used as a standalone spread or dip, or as a filler in food bars, cookies or confections. It also shines in other areas such as soups, smoothies, entrées, oatmeal, desserts and sandwiches.

JUST THE STATS

By 2024, the nut butter category is expected to reach \$1.81 billion in sales according to a [Research and Markets](#) report. The category once dominated by peanut butters has expanded in size and diversity with other nut butters, including walnut butter, arriving on the scene and competing for consumer attention in flavors, nutrition and protein content.

WHAT'S TRENDING: ALTERNATIVE NUT BUTTERS

In [Whole Foods Market's](#) Top 10 Food Trends for 2020, "alternative nut butters" were named as one of the most anticipated and innovative trends of the year. We agree, and consumer demand for more diverse and innovative products is apparent as new products flood the market. Many of these products contain multiple nut mixes and nontraditional flavorings.

WHAT'S TRENDING: PREMIUM

In the nut butter category, consumers are willing to pay for a premium product if it caters to a specific need they have. These needs range from dietary – paleo- and keto-friendly – to nutrition, protein content and omega-3 fatty acid.

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LEADERS OF THE PACK

Chocolate Reishi Nut Butter

BUTTERFLY SUPERFOODS
LOS ANGELES, CA

The sweet combination of dark chocolate and walnuts is highlighted in Butterfly Superfoods' Chocolate Reishi Nut Butter, which was a [New Hope Network Editors' Pick](#). Unique ingredients shine in this nut butter, which includes reishi mushroom powder, walnuts, cacao, cinnamon, vanilla extract and monk fruit. This sugar- and gluten-free nut butter pairs great with fruits, on toast or rice cakes or in a smoothie.



WHAT'S TRENDING: MOOD BOOST

Food manufacturers are using more mood-boosting ingredients in their packaged snack offerings, as reported by Bakery & Snacks. Nut butters have made their mark in this category, and [Bakery & Snacks](#) says nut butters as mood boosters “will become particularly prevalent as consumers move away from the three-square-meals-a-day custom and dive headlong into snacking throughout the day.”

WHY USE WALNUTS? FLAVOR COMBINATIONS

Walnut butter’s subtle nutty flavor allows for endless flavor combinations. Dark chocolate was named the No. 1 flavor pairing with walnuts in a [Davis Sensory Institute](#) study, and walnut butters combined with chocolate are trending. Vanilla also made the top 5, as well as an assortment of savory and spicy flavor pairings.

WHY USE WALNUTS? OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS

Walnuts are the only nut that provides an excellent source of plant-based omega-3 ALA, with 2.5 grams per ounce. Walnuts are unique among nuts as they are primarily composed of polyunsaturated fatty acids, whereas most other nuts contain mostly monounsaturated fats.

WHY USE WALNUTS? PROTEIN

Consumers are flocking to nut butters for their protein content, and one ounce of walnuts contains 4 grams of plant-based protein. In addition, walnuts also contain 2 grams of fiber.

NUT BUTTER LEADERS OF THE PACK

Chocolate Espresso Walnut Butter

CRAZY GO NUTS
CLOVIS, CA

Made with California walnuts, Crazy Go Nuts’ Chocolate Espresso Walnut Butter is a fun way to get your morning grande mocha frappuccino with ingredients that are all-natural. The gluten-free walnut butter’s flavor profile provides a balance of ground cocoa and espresso – a blend that’s a great way to boost your mood.

Nut Butter Bites

ABBY’S BETTER
CHARLOTTE, NC

Want nut butter in a bite? Check out Abby’s Better Nut Butter Bites. The Chocolate Walnut variety is plant-based, gluten-free and includes walnuts, dates, cocoa powder and pink Himalayan salt.



8 DAIRY

Dairy isn't restricted to milk-based products alone. The "dairy" section at supermarkets has undergone a transformation in the past 10 years, with shifts in plant-based products gaining ground. Walnuts offer the perfect dairy substitute, providing a creamy and nutty flavor perfect for milks, creamers and more.

JUST THE FACTS

Plant-based milk currently comprises 13% of total retail milk sales, a growth of 6% from last year. Market research company [Mordor Intelligence's Global Dairy Alternative Products Market Forecast](#) predicts that the dairy alternatives category will reach \$23.35 billion, growing at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 9.85% through 2024.

WHAT'S TRENDING: PLANT-BASED CATEGORY EXPANSION

First the milk aisle started shifting to more plant-based alternatives, and now we're seeing this trend take hold in yogurt, ice creams and spreads. This shift to more nut-based products represents a growing consumer base of plant-based eaters.

WHAT'S TRENDING: CREAMERS

Nut-based creamers allow consumers to sweeten their coffee with a plant-based alternative. This category is growing rapidly in both foodservice and the supermarket.

WHY USE WALNUTS? TEXTURE

In plant-based yogurts and cheeses, walnuts can be used either as an inclusion to provide texture or as the base to provide body. In ice cream, walnut inclusions provide texture and indulgence.

WHY USE WALNUTS? OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS

How do you make your nut milk stand out? Omega-3 fatty acids. Walnuts are the only nut that provides an excellent source of plant-based omega-3 ALA, with 2.5 grams per ounce. One ounce of walnuts also contains 4 grams of plant-based protein.



LEADERS OF THE PACK

Rocky Road Chocolate Ice Cream

VAN LEEUWEN
NEW YORK, NY

For this decadent vegan chocolate ice cream, the company uses a combination of candied California walnuts, chocolate chips and vegan marshmallows.

Milked Walnuts

ELMHURST
BUFFALO, NY

Touting the omega-3 ALA benefit of walnuts, Milked Walnuts walnut milk by Elmhurst comes in sweetened and unsweetened varieties. This unique product is shelf stable (no refrigeration required until opened) and is made with just two ingredients: walnuts and water. The walnut milk is Non-GMO Project verified and kosher.

Walnutmilk

MARIANI
WINTERS, CA

The Mariani family's line of Walnutmilks includes Unsweetened, Original, Vanilla and Chocolate varieties. The naturally creamy walnut milks contain 40 calories and 500mg of omega-3s per serving. The plant-based beverages are perfect for cereal, blending in a smoothie or simply drinking a tall glass.





California Walnut Commission

If you have any questions or would like
more information, please contact
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