

Peanut Bites



Peanuts and Chocolate: The Perfect Pair

Recently, The Peanut Institute proposed to have Dr. Penny Kris-Etherton, Pennsylvania State University Distinguished Professor of Nutrition, speak on the health benefits of peanuts and chocolate at the 2016 Professional Manufacturing Confectioners Association (PMCA) Annual Production Conference in Lancaster, PA.

Dr. Kris-Etherton's presentation, titled "Peanuts and Chocolate: The Perfect Pair", highlighted the many health benefits of this popular food pairing, beyond it being one of the tastiest.

This presentation was very well received, and as a follow-up, Dr. Kris-Etherton wrote an article on this topic to be published in PMCA's journal *The Manufacturing Confectioner*.

Nuts and Chocolate: The Perfect Pair

Consumption of both is recommended for health. It is important to scientifically evaluate the health benefits realized by pairing them.

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There is a very long history about the health benefits of nuts and chocolate/cocoa that dates back centuries. These nutrients, in part, have been the basis for contemporary research that has evaluated the many health benefits of these foods. Currently, there is a large and impressive scientific evidence base that demonstrates the health benefits of nuts, peanuts and chocolate/cocoa. As such, this research has been the basis for current dietary guidelines, as well as a qualified health claim for nuts and peanuts, that recommends consumption of both for health. Interestingly, little is known about the health benefits of "pairing" (i.e., combining non-sweetened and chocolate/cocoa). This question remains about whether there are additive or even synergistic effects of pairing non-sweetened with chocolate/cocoa.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In ancient times, different tree nuts were used for medicinal purposes. Almonds were believed to prevent intoxication when eaten with alcoholic beverages, promote sleep and

stimulate appetite. Tantal application was used for headaches. Walnuts were used as an antiseptic for many maladies and also to promote digestion. In addition, water leaves and oil were used for many other health conditions, including for diarrhea and constipation. Pistachios were regarded as an aphrodisiac, an antidote against poisonous animal bites and as a remedy for a host of health issues including gastrointestinal problems, chest ailments and circulatory disorders. The health benefits of hazelnuts and pine nuts, other nuts native to the Mediterranean and Middle East regions, also were recognized in ancient times. Contemporary research has demonstrated many health benefits of tree nuts and peanuts, which has been the basis for new dietary recommendations that promote tree nut and peanut consumption for health (Figure 1).

The medical use of chocolate dates back to Mesoamerican civilizations, which predates what is now Central America, where it was believed to be a remedy for many disorders. As early as 1800s, among the San Lorenzo Otzum there is evidence that cacao was a



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Peanut Butter Granola Bars with Dark Chocolate

- 2 cups quick oats
- 3/4 cup roasted unsalted peanuts, crushed
- 1 1/4 cup smooth peanut butter
- 1/2 cup brown rice syrup
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/4 teaspoon sea salt
- 3/4 cup chopped dark chocolate

Heat a large skillet over medium heat. Add oats and toast, stirring occasionally, for 6 to 8 minutes. Remove from heat and place in a bowl along with the crushed peanuts.

In a small saucepan, combine the peanut butter, brown rice syrup, vanilla, and salt. Heat over medium-low heat, stirring frequently, until the brown rice syrup easily combines with the peanut butter (2-3 minutes). Pour mixture over the oats and stir until well combined. You may need to knead with your

In her article, Dr. Kris-Etherton summarizes the

many health benefits of peanuts and dark chocolate, writing "the health benefits of peanuts, which are legumes, are of particular interest because they are the most commonly consumed nut in the United States."

Peanuts are an excellent source of nutrients such as folate, magnesium, alpha tocopherol, and fiber. They contain more protein than any other nut, as well as high levels of the amino acid arginine. Polyphenols such as resveratrol are also found in peanut skins. As such, an impressive body of scientific evidence shows that consumption of peanuts is associated with reduced risk of type II diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and mortality.

"Given the popularity and affordability of peanuts, consumption of peanuts may be a cost-effective strategy to improve health."

As reduced risk of mortality, coronary artery disease and stroke are associated with consumption of dark chocolate, Dr. Kris-Etherton poses the question of whether additive or synergistic health benefits may be obtained if peanuts were to be paired with dark chocolate and cacao. She invites the scientific community to evaluate the health benefits realized by such a pairing.

"The consensus in the nutrition community," Dr. Kris-Etherton writes, "is that when included as part of a healthy dietary pattern, these foods confer health benefits." As if we needed another reason to reach for dark chocolate with peanut butter.

Visit [The Manufacturing Confectioner](#) to access Dr. Kris-Etherton's article.

hands to mix thoroughly.

Line an 8x8 pan with parchment paper and transfer the oat mixture to the pan. Press into an even layer. Cool for one hour in the refrigerator, or 30 minutes in the freezer. Do not allow to freeze.

Place chocolate in a double boiler and heat over medium-low heat. Stir and scrape the sides and bottom of the double boiler frequently, until chocolate has melted.

Remove granola bars from the pan and cut into 16 1 in x 4 in bars. Dip the bottom half of the granola bars into the melted chocolate. Let the excess chocolate run off, and place the bars on parchment paper. Drizzle any remaining chocolate on top of the bars. Return bars to the refrigerator to allow chocolate to set.

Bars may be stored at room temperature for up to 2 days, in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks, or in the freezer for up to 1 month.

Nutrition Information (per serving):

Calories: 277, Fat: 17g, Saturated Fat: 4g, Cholesterol: 0mg, Protein: 7g, Carbohydrate: 29g, Fiber: 3g, Sugar: 13g, Sodium: 143 mg

Recipe from [Naturally Ella](#)