



Culinary and Cultural Connections of Almonds MP3

Rod Bain [00:00:00] Smoked almonds is a delicacy enjoyed by many, a delicacy that's been around for a while. And these days you can find almonds with a wide range of flavorings; plain, salty, sweet, smoky, spicy. As USDA VegU-cator, Chantel Oyi explains, all let's lend themselves the compliment several flavor profiles.

Chantel Oyi [00:00:20] Almond is pretty neutral; however, they just add that crunchiness texture to a lot of different flavor profiles. So, for example, if you're looking for a sweet and salty, you might find sea salt covered chocolate almond, if you're looking for a savory, lemon almond green bean.

Rod Bain [00:00:35] And according to fellow VegU-cator Tomi Ajiboye...

Tomi Ajiboye [00:00:38] Immature green almond can be preserved and pickled. Some consider it a delicacy.

Rod Bain [00:00:42] Yet almonds are not just snack fare. 40 percent of all almonds as food are used in ingredients for chocolates and other candy items. Chantel Oyi adds...

Chantel Oyi [00:00:51] We use almonds for almond butter, almond meal as the alternative to gluten products or wheat products.

Rod Bain [00:00:58] Now, although products like almond meal and almond based beverages have grown in popularity in recent years, Oyi notes that they have actually been around for some time, centuries for that matter.

Chantel Oyi [00:01:08] Popular and Persia and Arabic culture, earlier on, they actually use the almond meal, which is just rounded up almonds, turned into a meal and they added that with water. They've used that drink as a refreshing drink, and they also added it to their recipes even at that time.

Rod Bain [00:01:23] In fact, almonds tend to have a culinary and cultural connection to many nations and regions around the world. Some examples include...

Chantel Oyi [00:01:30] In Sweden, they use a cinnamon flavor, rice pudding, and they hide an almond inside of that rice pudding. And if you find that almond inside of the rice pudding, it means good fortune is yours for the year. China, they consider the ominous symbol of enduring sadness and female beauty.

Rod Bain [00:01:45] Another product derived from almonds is almond oil, a product that can be used in cooking and in non-food products.

Chantel Oyi [00:01:52] It's also used in plenty of our lotions, our body scrubs, our soaps, as well as our carrier oils for essential oils. So almond oil has a very popular use in today's culture.

Rod Bain [00:02:03] Now, one thing you may not know, or have considered with almonds in the raw form, or any form for that matter, they have a shelf life. How can you tell if they are becoming rancid?

Chantel Oyi [00:02:13] You want to slice the almond in half and look for a solid white texture throughout, and that would be a fresh almond. But if you slice it and you see a yellowish texture with a honeycombish look, that may mean that it was way past its prime and probably should be discarded.

Rod Bain [00:02:28] I'm Rod Bain reporting for the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Washington, D.C.