

BETter Living ...

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Healthy Snack Choice

Did you select a healthy snack today? April is National Pecan Month. Pecans are a healthy snack. They contain more than 19 vitamins and minerals and more antioxidants than any other nut variety. Pecans can help reduce the risk of heart disease and lower cholesterol levels.

The Federal Dietary guidelines have urged Americans to reduce their sodium intake. Pecans are naturally sodium free and a high-quality source of protein. A serving of pecans is 20 pecan halves. Pack some in your lunch and you can have them for a snack in the afternoon, instead of visiting the vending machine.

Pecans are not only a great snack they are a superb addition to a morning cereal, lunchtime salad, brunch casserole, or make a yogurt parfait. A serving of pecans provides the same fiber amount as a medium-sized apple. They also provide lasting energy because they contain heart-healthy monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats. After eating pecans you will feel full longer.

The next time you are in the store thinking about buying some snacks, grab a bag of pecan halves. For more information visit: www.ilovepecans.org/index.html

Here is a recipe to incorporate pecans into your next vegetable dish:

Broccoli Gratin with Horseradish and Georgia Pecans

Serves 8

Baked vegetable dishes are a perennial potluck favorite and a staple of community cookbooks. This one combines a familiar green veggie with some delicious surprise ingredients: pecans for crunch and richness, and horseradish for spice.

Prep time: 10 minutes

Cooking and baking time: 30 minutes

2 bags (10 oz each) frozen broccoli flowerets

1/2 cup roasted red pepper strips

1/2 cup Georgia pecan halves

1/4 teaspoon each salt and black pepper

3 tablespoons butter, divided

1/4 cup mayonnaise

2 tablespoons prepared horseradish sauce

1/4 cup dry coarse breadcrumbs

2 tablespoons grated Parmesan

Fresh lemon juice to sprinkle

Heat oven to 350°F. Lightly oil a 9-inch round baking dish or pie plate. Thaw broccoli in skillet over medium heat. Drain well. Transfer to bowl and add red pepper and pecans. Sprinkle with salt and pepper.

In same skillet, melt 2 tablespoons butter. Whisk in mayonnaise and horseradish sauce and cook over low, stirring, to make a smooth sauce. Pour sauce over broccoli, peppers, and pecans and stir gently to coat. Spread mixture in prepared baking dish; sprinkle with breadcrumbs and cheese. Dot with remaining tablespoon butter and bake on top rack in oven for 20 to 25 minutes until golden. Serve warm.

Nutrition information per serving – calories: 179; protein: 4g; carbs: 8g; saturated fat: 5g; monounsaturated fat: 6g; polyunsaturated fat: 4g; cholesterol: 18mg; fiber: 3g; sodium 235mg.

Courtesy: Georgia Pecan Commission