

CHESTNUTS AUSTRALIA INC

Chestnuts are quite different from other nuts nutritionally and in a culinary sense. They have a sweet, nutty taste and a texture similar to a firm baked potato rather than a crunchy one. A standard serve of chestnuts is equivalent to about 30g or around four chestnuts.

- A good source of low Glycaemic Index (GI) carbohydrate – chestnut meal has been GI tested and has a low to moderate GI value of 54¹
- Gluten free (GF) – while all nuts are GF, chestnut flour is a great replacement in baked products for those with Coeliac disease or gluten intolerance.² Chestnut and other nut meals can help provide variety to the diet. Since GF diets tend to have a higher GI, nuts in general can help to lower the overall GI of these diets.
- A source of dietary fibre – roasted chestnuts provide around 2g of fibre per 30g serve.^{3,4} This is particularly important for those with Coeliac disease who may not be getting enough fibre in the diet.
- Low in total fat and saturated fat – chestnuts contain less than 1g of total fat per 100g, making them a tasty addition to a healthy, balanced, low saturated fat diet.⁴
- Source of vitamin C – chestnuts are the only nuts that contain vitamin C, with about 12mg in a 30g serve of raw product – 25% of the RDI for vitamin C. However the amount of vitamin C decreases by a third to a half after heating.⁵

Emerging research

Like other nuts, phytochemical compounds are also found in chestnuts including phenolics (gallic and ellagic acid) with antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects.⁶ Extracts from the inner chestnut shell, which is generally not eaten, is rich in antioxidants. Animal studies are showing interesting effects on carbohydrate absorption by acting as an alpha amylase inhibitor.^{7,8}

Nutrient profile

Nutritional analysis of roasted chestnuts⁴

Nutrient	Per 100g
Energy (kJ)	724
Protein (g)	3.4
Fat, total (g)	0.6
Fat, saturated (g)	0.1
Fat, monounsaturated (g)	n/a
Fat, polyunsaturated (g)	n/a
Carbohydrate, total (g)	34.3
Carbohydrate, sugars (g)	3.8
Dietary fibre (g)	8.1

Seasonality

Chestnut season is from mid March to June when they are generally sold fresh. They are also available throughout the year as ready-peeled and frozen, flour, dried meal and sweetened puree.

Storage

When buying chestnuts, look for glossy nuts which feel heavy for their size, with undamaged, firm shells. Due to their high moisture content (they are almost 50% water) chestnuts can dry out easily. If storing them for more than a day or two, place in a plastic bag in the crisper section of the fridge to help retain their moisture. They should be stored as near as possible to 0°C. With proper storage, chestnuts can remain in good condition for a few weeks.

How to prepare and cook chestnuts⁹

If you have never had the pleasure of eating 'roasted chestnuts on an open fire', it's time you tried them. Before cooking, cut the shell to prevent the nut exploding while cooking. Some people cut a slit across the face of the nut, others cut a cross into the flat-end.

- To bake: preheat oven to 200°C. Place cut chestnuts onto a baking tray and bake for 15-20 minutes or until the shell splits open.
- To microwave: place cut chestnuts in a single layer on a microwave-safe plate. Cook, uncovered, on 850 watts/high/100% for four to six minutes or until flesh is tender.
- To roast, grill or barbeque: cook cut nuts, turning occasionally, in a pan over

Nutrient	Per 100g
Folate (ug)	70
Vitamin C 6	40
Sodium (mg)	1.0
Potassium (mg)	574
Magnesium (mg)	33
Calcium (mg)	13
Phosphorus (mg)	107
Iron (mg)	0.8
Zinc (mg)	0.5

medium heat for 20-30 minutes or until shell splits open.

- To boil (if using to puree): place cut chestnuts into a pan of cold water, bring to the boil, cover and simmer for 15-20 minutes or until flesh is tender.

Wrap the cooked chestnuts in a tea-towel for 10 minutes to provide steam- this helps with the peeling process. Then remove outer shell and inner skin while still warm (they're tricky to peel once cooled).

Links

For further information on the nutritional benefits of nuts visit www.nutsforlife.com.au or for specific information on chestnuts go to www.chestnutsaustralia.com.au

References

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