



Processing Macadamia Nuts at Home

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Macadamia nuts, famous as “Hawaii’s desert nut,” can be grown in many parts of the islands and are a favorite as a snacking nut or baking nut. Processing these nuts at home involves several steps following harvest: husking, drying, cracking, roasting, and salting. None of these steps is easily accomplished at home, but the following instructions provide a guide to allow you to produce a product that, although not quite the same as a commercial product, will be acceptable.

- 1.** Remove the outer husk from the nuts soon after gathering them.
- 2.** Air-dry them in their shells for two to three weeks by spreading them out in layers not more than two nuts deep, preferably on screens, in the shade. Have good circulation of air. The nuts should be sufficiently dry to crack—that is, they should be loosened from the shell.
- 3.** Crack the nuts using a vise or a cracker specially made for cracking macadamia nuts. Separate the shells. The nuts are now ready for the final drying step. Ideally, a home food dehydrator should be used so that the drying temperature can be well controlled. A second-best, more problematic alternative is to dry the nuts in an oven at low temperature.

Start the drying at 100°F, to dry them very slowly. After perhaps two days, increase the heat to 140°F. Because of the wide range of possible drying conditions, it

is difficult to predict how long the drying process will take. Check the texture of the kernels periodically by biting into a kernel. Completely dry kernels will be very crisp.

The drying process needs to be slow. If the temperature is too high, the kernels may be unevenly dried, change color, or have brown centers when roasted. After the kernels have dried thoroughly, they are ready for roasting. If you are going to use them soon, they can be stored in tightly sealed jars for a short while, but they also will keep very well if frozen. For longer storage, freeze them, but be sure to thaw them in the closed jar before further use.

- 4.** To roast macadamia nuts, place dried kernels in the oven at 275°F for 20–30 minutes. Wire-screen trays are best for the roasting process, but a baking sheet can be used if the kernels are stirred periodically. Check the color development as the roasting progresses, and roast to the desired golden color.
- 5.** For salted macadamia nuts, coat the roasted kernels very lightly with a small quantity of salad oil. Apply the desired amount of salt and stir to distribute the salt evenly. Place the nuts in a jar to protect them from picking up moisture. If they are not to be consumed soon, they may be kept frozen for up to a year.

6. ENJOY!