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CHESTNUT COOKING INSTRUCTIONS

HOW TO STORE FRESH CHESTNUTS:

Chestnuts are perishable. Fresh chestnuts are high in moisture and starch. They feel firm when squeezed. As they dry or cure, the starches are converted to sugars. At this point, they become much sweeter and easier to peel. Cured chestnuts will have some "give" when squeezed. Chestnuts will cure in a few days if kept in a warm, dry, ventilated place. Then they need to be refrigerated because they can mold easily under warm conditions. Chestnuts will cure slowly in modern frost-free refrigerators, with less risk of mold damage. Once they are cured, they can be frozen or kept in a perforated plastic bag or in a crisper drawer. Left unbagged in a frost-free refrigerator, they tend to dry out excessively - becoming hard after several weeks. If they dry out before use follow directions for preparing dried chestnuts. Properly cured refrigerated chestnuts can be stored for 4-5 months, beyond that they should be frozen.

TO PREPARE FRESH CHESTNUTS:

Cutting a criss-cross slash in the shell has been traditionally recommended. We prefer to cut the nut fully in half because it seems less awkward. Cut each nut in half with a sharp knife on a cutting board. Then you can also see that the nuts are sound(i.e. no mold).

ROASTING: This method makes a crunchy nut.

OVEN METHOD: Place nuts in a shallow baking pan and roast in a 400 degree oven for 15 minutes, tossing occasionally.

SKILLET METHOD: Place cut nuts in a heavy skillet. In shell, no oil or water is necessary. Cook on medium high heat, for about 10 minutes. Shake the skillet several times or stir so they don't burn. They should start to smell good. Shut off the heat. Take out a few at a time and peel while still hot. The pellicle (the brown inner skin) will come off easiest while still hot.

BOILING:

Place cut chestnuts in a saucepan of water. Bring to boiling; boil for 8 to 10 minutes. Remove from heat. With a slotted spoon, remove 3 - 4 nuts at a time from the water. Peel off outer shells and rub off inner brown skins. Keep unpeeled chestnuts warm in the original cooking liquid until peeling time, or the brown inner skin (pellicle) will be difficult to remove.

MICROWAVE INSTRUCTIONS:

Cut the nuts in half and put them on a plate. Loosely cover with plastic wrap or a paper towel. Heat for 2 minutes and peel while warm. Smaller nuts will only need to cook for 1 minute.

HOW TO COOK DRIED CHESTNUTS:

Bring water to a rolling boil. If unpeeled, peel off brown outer skin. Add to water and cook for 8 minutes. Remove inner skin if necessary.