

Roasting Chestnuts by Sandy Moyer, BellaOnline

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When buying fresh chestnuts for roasting, choose those that are firm and heavy for their size, with smooth, glossy shells. Select chestnuts that are all about the same size.

One pound of fresh raw chestnuts equals about 2 cups roasted, shelled chestnuts.

Chestnuts are highly perishable. To keep them fresh, store them in a ventilated plastic bag in the crisper of your refrigerator or freeze them for later use.

The easiest way to roast chestnuts is to roast them in an oven....
Rinse the chestnuts. After rinsing, lay them on a towel and pat dry.

Use a strong, sharp paring knife to cut an "X" in the flat side of the chestnut shells. This prevents them from bursting, allows the steam to escape and makes peeling easier.

Place the prepared chestnuts in a single layer on a shallow baking pan. Roast at 375° for about 20 minutes. For even roasting, gently stir to turn them over after about 10 minutes. The sliced part of the shells will curl back.

Remove the chestnuts from the oven and place them in a towel-lined bowl, wrap the hot chestnuts in an old towel (no matter which way you chose to roast them) and squeeze them hard. Squeezing the chestnuts will break and crush the skins which will make peeling them much easier to do. Let the crushed chestnuts rest inside the towel for about 5 minutes before unwrapping them. Remove the shells by hand while still hot, but cool enough to handle. Be careful not to burn your fingers. Starting at the slit, pull the shell away from the nutmeat. The inside skin will peel away from the chestnut along with the outer shell. Serve plain or dip in melted butter. Sprinkle very lightly with cinnamon, if desired.





If you have a fireplace, you might want to try the more traditional way to roast chestnuts... over an open fire. You'll need a fireplace popcorn popper or chestnut roaster. Vintage long-handled poppers can sometimes be found at flea markets or antique shops.

To roast chestnuts over an open fire....

Place a layer of chestnuts in the pan. Place the popper/roaster over a low fire for about 20 to 25 minutes or more, balancing it on logs, while frequently shaking it back and forth. You can slit the shells first, as directed for oven-roasting, or, since the chestnuts are roasting inside a covered vessel, you can just let them burst for the "pop, pop, pop" effect as in "The Christmas Song".

The chestnuts are done when the shells curl back or when they break open. The bottom of the shells might char lightly and turn black. Peel and eat, while hot, as directed above.