Snack Recipes

Dark Chocolate Pumpkin Seeds

Submitted by Connie of Pleasanton, Texas, participant in Rx for Better Breast Health

Ingredients:
1 lb. bittersweet chocolate (at least 65% cacao)
1 cup pumpkin seeds
1 tsp. salt

*Tempering: When you examine a top-quality chocolate bar or a well-made dipped truffle, the chocolate is shiny, firm enough to tap with your fingernail, and will break with a sharp snap. That’s because it’s tempered. Tempering is a process that encourages the cocoa butter in the chocolate to harden into a specific crystalline pattern, which maintains the sheen and texture for a long time. When chocolate isn’t tempered, it may not ever set up hard at room temperature; it may become hard, but look dull and blotchy; the internal texture may be spongy rather than crisp; and it can be susceptible to fat bloom, meaning the fats will migrate to the surface and make whitish streaks. For chocolate to be firm at room temperature, have a glossy sheen and a crisp texture, you must temper the melted chocolate. For tempering, always use top-quality dark, milk or white chocolate. Compound chocolate, which is a lower-quality chocolate, contains other fats beside cocoa butter, so it often doesn’t need tempering. Chocolate that’s combined with other ingredients, as in a chocolate cake or mousse, doesn’t need to be tempered. If you’re in a hurry and intend to keep the candy refrigerated, just melt the chocolate slowly in microwave stirring frequently.

Preparation:
1. Place pumpkin seeds and salt in small ungreased skillet. Toast and stir over medium heat till browned. Set aside.
2. To temper* the chocolate, place 3/4 of the chocolate in a microwave-safe bowl. Program microwave to 50% power. With the bowl uncovered, heat the chocolate for 30 seconds and then stir with rubber spatula. Repeat, heating for 30 seconds and then stirring, until almost all the chocolate in the bowl is melted, about 3 minutes total. Using an instant-read thermometer, check the temperature of the chocolate. It should be 110 degrees F to 115 degrees F. If it hasn’t reached desired temperature, continue to heat in 10 second increments. Add the reserved chocolate and stir constantly until completely melted and smooth and thermometer reads 88 degrees F at 90 degrees F. The chocolate is now tempered.
3. Stir the toasted salted pumpkin seeds into the chocolate. Spread the chocolate in an even layer about 1-4 inch thick on parchment paper or on 2 silicone 11x15 baking sheets. Cool at room temperature until hard. Break into irregular pieces.
4. Store in airtight container at room temperature.

Chef Iverson Brownell Recommends
Add 1 tbsp. of finely chopped rosemary and 1 tsp. ground cinnamon to melted chocolate!