

George Washington Carver's Many Uses of Peanuts

By Janet Hackert, Regional Nutrition and Health Education Specialist

February is Black History Month. As a nutritionist, this brings to mind my favorite African American scientist: George Washington Carver. Dr. Carver studied several plants, but perhaps is most well-known for his work with peanuts.

Carver discovered over 300 uses of peanuts, with such versatility as shaving cream, shampoo, wood stains, and plastics. He also came up with an amazing number of edible options for peanuts. In his 1925 report called "How to Grow the Peanut and 105 Ways of Preparing it for Human Consumption," he gives recipes for 5 different peanut soups, 6 types of breads, 5 peanut salads, 21 desserts plus 29 candies (including peanut and prune ice cream and peanut carrot fudge). Some recipes were for much more common foods, such as peanut butter and peanut brittle. He also came up with several ways to eat peanuts as a main dish, such as liver with peanuts, mock meats including chicken, veal cutlets, and sausage, peanut omelet, and baked peanuts with rice.

Carver studied this legume because he wanted to help poor cotton farmers in the south improve their depleted soil. He found that it was an inexpensive protein food crop too. Dry roasted peanuts are an excellent source of magnesium, niacin, and potassium. They are also a good source of zinc, copper, thiamine, and phosphorus. They are high in fiber and contain iron, pantothenic acid, and vitamin B₆. Peanuts are also high in fat, mostly unsaturated fat, which is a healthier choice than the saturated fat found in meat.

For parents of children who are not fond of meat, and for those whose work find them on the go at mealtimes, peanuts can be a convenient way to fit in a healthy snack. A half an ounce of peanuts (or tree nuts such as almonds, walnuts, and cashews) or a tablespoon of peanut butter counts as equivalent to 1 ounce from the protein group. Most older children and adults need approximately 4-6.5 ounces from this group daily. Of course, peanut allergies can also be a concern.

For more information on Dr. Carver's accomplishments and the many uses of peanuts he discovered, go to <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/plantanswers/recipes/peanutrecipes.html>. For more information on any other topic, contact your local [University of Missouri Extension office](#). University of Missouri Extension - your one-stop source for practical education on almost anything.

-##-