



SOUTH CAROLINA FAMILY AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

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Service

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Leader Training Guide

Pecans- History, Production, Recipe

Objectives:

Explain the historical importance of pecans in North America, describe their production, identify major production regions, discuss nutritional uses, and understand the cultural significance of pecans in Southern cuisine.

Lesson Overview/Introduction:

The pecan is a tree nut native to North America. It grows on large deciduous trees (trees that shed their leaves annually) and is known for its rich flavor and buttery texture. Pecans are widely used in baking, candy making, cooking, and the production of cooking oils.

The name "pecan" comes from an Algonquin Native American word meaning "a nut requiring a stone to crack." During the 17th century, French and Spanish explorers adopted the Native American term. The French adapted it to "pacane" and the Spanish to "pacana." The first known English appearance of the word was around 1712, when it was spelled "paccan" before eventually becoming standardized as "pecan."

The pronunciation of pecan is a popular topic of debate in the United States. However, the pronunciation "puh-cahn" is considered closer to the original French and Indigenous origins. How do you pronounce pecan?

Lesson:

History of Pecans:

Native American Origins:

- Pecans were an important food source for Native Americans.
- Pecans are high in protein and healthy fats; they can be stored for long periods, and they grow naturally along river valleys.
- Tribes used pecans in soups, breads, and beverages.

European Discovery:

- Spanish and French explorers discovered the pecan in the 1500s and 1600s and brought it back to Europe, where it became popular.

Growth in the United States:

- During the 1800s, farmers began planting pecan orchards and improving varieties through selective breeding.
- Major pecan-producing states include:
 - Georgia, Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Louisiana

Production of Pecans:

- Pecan trees grow best in warm climates with deep, fertile soil, plenty of water, and long growing seasons. Pecan trees can live for more than 100 years.
- Trees may take 6-10 years before producing large nut crops.
- Pecan trees rely on wind pollination. Wind pollination is the “transfer of pollen from the male to female flower parts using air currents.”
- Pecans are harvested in the fall when the outer husk splits open. Most producers use machines to shake the trees, and then sweepers come and collect the nuts from the ground. They are then cleaned, dried, and sorted.

Uses of Pecans:

- Popular uses for pecans include pecan pie, pecan pralines and other candies, ice cream, salads, cookies, and cakes. They also make delicious and nutritious snacks.
- Pecans are packed with healthy fats, protein, fiber, vitamins and minerals, and antioxidants.
- The United States is one of the world’s leading pecan producers.
- Pecan wood is sometimes used for furniture, flooring, and smoking meats.

Nutritional Benefits:

Pecans are a good source of heart-healthy unsaturated fats, fiber, protein, and antioxidants. The fiber found in pecans supports digestive health, helps promote feelings of fullness, and may help support healthy cholesterol levels.

Food Safety Tips:

- Store shelled pecans in an airtight container in the refrigerator or freezer to prevent them from becoming rancid.
- Wash hands before handling pecans or preparing recipes.
- Check nuts for signs of mold, unusual odors, or discoloration before use.
- When sharing homemade foods at events, follow safe food handling and storage practices.

Lesson Summary:

This lesson explores the origin of pecans, how they are grown and harvested, their nutritional benefits, and many ways pecans are used today in food, culture, and industry.

Suggested Activities:

- Read “Going Nuts” for more information on pecans in South Carolina specifically. Read “Pecan Tidbits” for the cultural significance of pecans.
- Share favorite pecan recipes or do a pecan taste test.
- Pecan pie is a fabulous dessert, but you can also make a pecan honey granola to add to yogurts or eat solo as a sweet and salty snack that is packed with healthy fats and nutrients. Here is a Pecan Honey Granola recipe to try. Print and distribute for the lesson.

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Sources/References:

Pecan Tidbits: Home and Garden Information Center:
<https://hgic.clemson.edu/pecan-tidbits/>

Honey Pecan Granola: <https://floralapron.com/honey-pecan-granola/#recipe>

History of the Pecan: https://www.hudsonpecan.com/blogs/news/history-of-the-pecan?srsltid=AfmBOor1UGerhnM_0VIKRfGYKEBezqqSboTOGwcJsSqr65Yxtww1cnN2

The History of Pecans: From Native American Staple to Modern Superfood:
https://www.knightpecanfarms.com/blogs/all/the-history-of-pecans-from-native-american-staple-to-modern-superfood?srsltid=AfmBOopjrYAQ_jRTcwvD4zdAqri-UO3mokXZ31jO9CXb85pyRJZqNhzM

Honey Pecan Granola

Author: Alyssa Adams of The Floral Apron

Homemade granola is easier than you would think to make and bound to be a favorite at the breakfast table! This honey pecan granola is sweetened with honey and loaded with pecan pieces for a nutty aftertaste.

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 20 minutes

Cool Time: 30 minutes

Total Time: 1 hour

Course: Granola

Cuisine: American

Servings: 12 1/3-cup servings

Ingredients

- ☐ 1/3 cup (115 g) honey
- ☐ 1/4 cup (50 g) brown sugar firmly packed
- ☐ 8 Tablespoons (113 g) salted butter one stick
- ☐ 1 pinch of salt
- ☐ 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- ☐ 3/4 cup (100 g) pecan pieces or pecan halves
- ☐ 3 cups (300 g) rolled oats

Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 300°F/150°C and line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Add honey, brown sugar, butter, and salt to a medium pot. Heat over medium heat, stirring occasionally with a spatula, until the butter has melted and the sugar has dissolved, for about 5 minutes. Stir in the vanilla extract, then remove from heat.

1/3 cup (115 g) honey, 1/4 cup (50 g) brown sugar, 8 Tablespoons (113 g) salted butter, 1 pinch of salt, 2 teaspoons vanilla extract

3. Add the pecan pieces and rolled oats to the honey mixture. Stir together until well combined and no dry patches of oats remain.

3/4 cup (100 g) pecan pieces, 3 cups (300 g) rolled oats

4. Pour the granola out onto the parchment-lined baking sheet and spread evenly across the pan with a spatula.
5. Bake for 20-30 minutes, until the granola is lightly golden brown on the edges. For extra crispy granola, gently stir the granola once halfway through baking.
6. Let the granola cool for about 30 minutes, then break into pieces with your hands. Once fully cooled, store in an airtight container.

Notes:

Pecan pieces are generally less expensive than pecan halves, but you can use either one. Use about 1 cup of pecan halves if you decide not to chop them into smaller pieces.

Homemade granola lasts for about a month when stored in an airtight container **after it has cooled completely**. If placed in an airtight container while just the slightest bit warm, the granola can get soggy and will not last as long. If you notice your granola is *really* sticky the next day, it may not have dried out enough during baking. You can dry the granola out a little more to improve its shelf life: Bake on a parchment-lined baking sheet for 5-10 more minutes at 300°F/150°C.

Recommended Supplies

- Chicago Metallic Non-Stick Baking Sheet
- DI ORO Silicone Spatula Set
- OXO Pop Container

Nutrition

Serving: 0.33 cup | Calories: 386kcal | Carbohydrates: 53g | Protein: 9g | Fat: 16g | Saturated Fat: 6g | Polyunsaturated Fat: 3g | Monounsaturated Fat: 6g | Trans Fat: 0.3g | Cholesterol: 20mg | Sodium: 65mg | Potassium: 256mg | Fiber: 7g | Sugar: 13g | Vitamin A: 237IU | Vitamin C: 0.1mg | Calcium: 42mg | Iron: 3mg