

Preparing and Cooking Fresh Chestnuts

***** Before Cooking *****

The most important step when preparing chestnuts is to cut the shell to prevent the chestnuts from exploding while cooking!

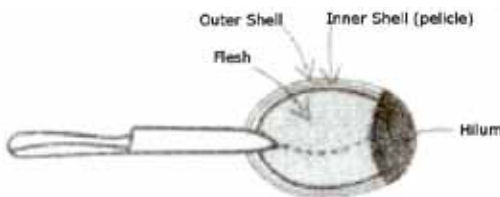
Sweetening Chestnuts

Remove nuts 2 days before use and let stand at room temperature to sweeten nuts. Chestnuts require free air circulation around the nuts or they will grow molds – distributed evenly in a single layer on a large cookie sheets works best.

Preparing Chestnuts

Wash chestnuts in cold water. On the flat side of the chestnut, make an X-shaped cut with a knife. Keep the slash shallow so that you do not cut into the chestnut meat.

Some people cut a slit across the face of the nut. We have found the best way to prepare chestnuts is to lay the chestnut



on the flatter side and cut or score halfway around the outer shell. The cut should go full thickness through the shell, and perhaps the pellicle, but not into the flesh of the chestnut.

Cooking – The five basic cooking methods

To Bake

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F. Spread the scored chestnuts on a baking sheet and place on the middle rack in the oven. Roast the chestnuts for 15-25 minutes. You may wish to turn them over after 5-10 minutes for a more even roasting. The chestnuts are done when they are tender. Remove from the oven and place in a tea towel or in a brown paper bag. Allow the nuts to cool for about 10 minutes in the moist environment of the towel/bag. After completing the 10 minutes of moist cooling remove and peel. Peeling is easiest while the chestnuts are still warm. Once peeled the chestnuts are ready to be served or placed in a favorite dish.

To Microwave

Place scored chestnuts in a single layer to cover a microwave safe plate. Cook uncovered on high for 30 seconds to 3 minutes depending on the quantity (3-7 can cook in 40 seconds). Chestnuts cook very fast in a microwave compared to other methods so start with short cook times and test if the chestnuts are tender.

To Deep Fry

Remove the outer shell of the chestnut before placing the hot oil. Preheat the oil in a pan deep enough to cover the chestnuts to about 350 degrees F. Once the oil is up to temperature, place 10 or so chestnuts in the hot oil being careful not to splash the hot oil. Fry the chestnuts for 3-5 minutes. Check for tenderness. Remove chestnuts from the oil and place on a paper towel to drain the excess oil. Let cool before removing the pellicle.

To Pan Roast or Grill

Cook the scored chestnuts in a pan over medium heat for 10-12 minutes or until the shells start to split, turning occasionally. Darkening of the outer shell is normal and does not affect the chestnut meat.

To Boil

Place shelled chestnuts in a pan of cold water and bring to a boil. Cover and simmer for 10-12 minutes or until the chestnut meat is tender.

Peeling Cooked Chestnuts

It is easier to peel chestnuts while they are still warm and damp. Wrap the cooked chestnuts in a tea towel to keep them warm while you are peeling the others. Remove the outer shell and also the inner brown skin or pellicle, as this can sometimes taste quite bitter. Boiled chestnuts are probably the easiest ones from which to peel the pellicle. Different varieties vary in their ease of peeling.