

## How do you like to eat your walnuts?

The English or Persian walnut (*Juglans regia*) is the nut commonly available in Australia. Most of us are familiar with the taste of dried English walnuts, but there are many other ways to enjoy the versatile walnut. As the names can be confusing, we explain them here.

This sheet is a guide to the terminology used for walnuts at successive stages of development.

### GREEN WALNUTS

These are immature walnuts that are harvested in early summer, before the shell hardens. They are oval with a hard, lime green husk speckled with small white dots. The flesh within the Green walnut is undeveloped - a gelatinous and sticky substance that is highly fragrant and aromatic. Green walnuts have a rather astringent or bitter flavour with mild spice-like notes. There are simple ways to remove their bitter tannins and transform them into something dark and well flavoured:



- 🔗 Green walnuts are harvested specifically for Nocino or Nocello liqueur in Italy and Vin de Noix "nectar" in France.
- 🔗 They can be pickled in vinegar using a number of spices. Pickled Green walnuts are most often served with cheeses and meats, typically in a Ploughman's Lunch. Or cook garlic, cloves and mace with vinegar, salt water, horseradish and Green walnuts for a 'walnut ketchup' that can be used as a condiment or replacement for Worcestershire sauce.
- 🔗 Glyko Karydaki is a traditional Greek spoon sweet made with young green walnuts, sugar, lemons and spices.

Walnut husks contain juglone, a chemical thought by some to have antibacterial, antiviral, antiparasitic and fungicidal effects.

***! Use care when handling, as the juices in a green walnut can leave your hands stained brown for several weeks.***



### WALNUT RIPENING

Between early summer and early autumn, the walnut shell hardens within its green husk and the kernel inside matures from a gelatinous state to a crunchy white tissue, rich in beneficial oils, with a delicate flavour. When the husk starts to crack, the harvest begins.

In Australia, this begins in early Autumn (March).

*Mature walnut on tree ready for harvest.*

## UNDRIED WALNUTS

In some cultures, people love to eat walnuts at this newly harvested stage, peeling off the skin covering the kernel. The kernel is still white and the flavour delicate. They are known as **FRESH, WET** or **NEWLY HARVESTED** walnuts.



**! These nuts are perishable and should be eaten within a few days of harvest.**

## DRIED WALNUTS

After harvest, the vast majority of Australian walnuts are dried until they reach a stable level of 8% moisture. In this state they will keep for at least a year if stored in a **cool, dry place**. The kernel is now light brown and its flavour should be warm and sweet, not bitter. These nuts are widely available in Australian shops.



## BLACK WALNUTS



The Black walnut (*Juglans nigra* and *Juglans hindsii*) is a native American tree, widely grown for the high quality of its hardwood for craftsmen and it also produces a very highly flavoured nut. The Black walnut is harder to shell than other varieties. It is grown in a few Australian orchards.

The husks are used by some for medicinal purposes.

## ACTIVATED NUTS

Soaking grains, nuts and seeds is an ancient art of food preparation thought to help improve digestibility by neutralising harmful phytic acid and enzyme inhibitors that bind to minerals such as calcium, iron, zinc and magnesium in the digestive tract, limiting their absorption into the body. Soaking walnut kernels, then slowly dehydrating them also gives a pleasant, crunchy texture to the nuts and reduces any possible bitterness of the skin.

### How to activate walnuts

- ☞ Dissolve ½ teaspoon salt in enough water to cover 1 cup walnut kernels.
  - ☞ Soak for 7-12 hours.
  - ☞ Strain and rinse the nuts.
  - ☞ Spread over a dehydrator rack or baking tray and dry in the dehydrator for 12-24 hours,
  - ☞ Or dry in the oven at the lowest temperature possible, preferably no more than 65 deg C. Stir or turn them occasionally, for the required drying time.
- Store in an airtight container or in the fridge or freezer.