

Oven Roasted Chestnuts - With Pre-Roast Water Soak



TIPS:

- 1. Why soak chestnuts before roasting?:** Soaking chestnuts after their shells have been cross-cut, as shown in step 1 below, adds moisture to the chestnut meat and allows that meat to steam more efficiently for an outstanding roasted chestnut flavor and texture.
- 2. Selecting fresh chestnuts:** Some

chestnuts, like those you see on these directions, come ready for sale in a bag. Other chestnuts are sold in bulk, which means you can select the individual chestnuts you want to buy. In that case, choose chestnuts that are firm to the touch - the shell should not give when squeezed with your thumb as shown in the picture below.



Also, choose chestnuts that are heavier rather than lighter in weight, as heavier chestnuts have more water content, which makes them better for roasting and chewing texture. Finally, don't buy any chestnuts that have any signs of mold or small round wormholes in their shells, like the hole that also has mold in it shown below.



3. Storing chestnuts: If you're not going to roast fresh chestnuts the same day you bought them, put them in a plastic bag and store them in the refrigerator for about 1 week. Just beware that the meat of the chestnut inside the shell dries out steadily over time.



Preparation Time: 5-10 minutes to crosscut chestnut shells plus 6-10 hours water soaking if you're using cold water or

5-10 minutes if you're soaking chestnuts in hot water.

Cooking Time: 25-30 minutes

Needed

About 1/4 Pound Fresh Chestnuts Per Person

Conventional Kitchen Oven

Small Sharp (Paring) Knife or Chestnut Knife

Roasting Pan

Bowl (for chestnut soaking)

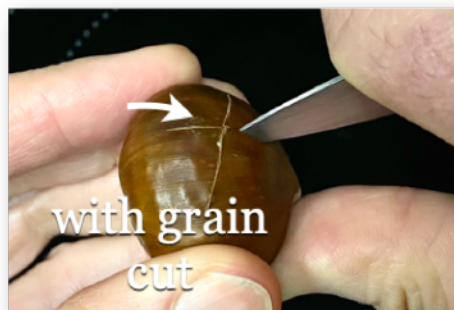
Water

Potholder or Folded Dishtowel



1. Use a small sharp (paring) knife to make 1/2 - 3/4 inch long, shell-penetrating shallow

cuts both across and with with the grain of the shell of **both sides of the chestnuts**



so that the **chestnuts** look as shown in the “cross cut” picture below. (These cuts will allow steam to escape during roasting and prevent the chestnuts from exploding while they roast.)



2. Put the **cut chestnuts** in a bowl and cover them with either **cold water** for 6-10 hours of soaking or use **hot (not boiling) water** to shorten soaking time to 5-10 minutes.



3. After letting the **chestnuts** soak, whether you used cold or hot water to soak them, preheat the oven to 500° F (260° C).



4. Lay out a clean towel on a baking sheet, drain the water from the **soaking chestnuts**, and spread the wet chestnuts on the towel.



Give the **chestnuts** a quick dry with the towel, and spread them evenly on the baking sheet.



5. When the oven has warmed to 500° F (260° C), put the **chestnuts** in the oven, reduce oven heat to 425° F (220° C) and set a timer for 20 minutes.



6. After 20 minutes, check the **chestnuts** for doneness.



Roasted chestnuts are cooked to appropriate doneness when their **shells** start curl back and the **meat** inside has browned lightly. Here is a closeup of the **chestnuts** shown above after 20 minutes of roasting.



Yes, the **shells** have started to curl back, but, to me, the **meat** didn't look done enough. I kept the **chestnuts** in the oven at 425° F (220° C) for another 10 minutes...



...until they looked like this.



Admittedly, you can't see a big difference between the 20 minute and 30 minute **roasted chestnuts**, but

after years of experience, the **chestnuts** shown above, *especially considering they had been pre-soaked in water*, looked to me like they were roasted to appropriate doneness.

7. Use a potholder or folded dishtowel to remove the **roasted chestnuts** from the oven, and transfer the **hot chestnuts** to a spread out dishtowel.



Gather the **hot chestnuts** in the middle of the towel, enclose them in the towel, as shown below right, and let the **chestnuts** sit for 5-10 minutes.



8. After 5-10 minutes, and when the chestnuts have cooled enough to touch safely, crack and peel the shell, and...



...remove as much of the **fuzzy membrane** as possible, which is actually optional. I sometimes like the added crispy crunch and flavor from the **chestnut membrane**, though that is certainly a matter of taste. Bottom line: don't worry if you can't peel away the entire **membrane**.

