

I HAD LUNCH at TenPenh here in Washington, D.C., for a friend's birthday. A "tea wheel" laden with goodies was brought to our table at the end of the meal. I couldn't get enough of the chocolate-covered cashews. I think they would be great to serve at a party instead of the same old salted pecans. Could you get the recipe for me?

KATHERINE M. WHANN
WASHINGTON, D.C.

CHOCOLATE-COVERED CASHEWS

Adapted from TenPenh

MAKES ABOUT 3½ CUPS

Active time: 20 min Start to finish: 1½ hr

These chocolaty cashews make a perfect after-dinner treat to serve with coffee or tea.

- ⅓ cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons water
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1¾ cups whole raw cashews (½ lb)
 - 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
 - 8 oz fine-quality bittersweet chocolate (not unsweetened or extra-bitter), chopped
 - 3 tablespoons unsweetened Dutch-process cocoa powder

- ▶ Line bottom of a shallow baking pan with parchment or wax paper.
- ▶ Bring sugar, water, and salt to a boil in a 12-inch heavy skillet, stirring until sugar is dissolved. Reduce heat and simmer syrup 2 minutes.
- ▶ Put nuts in a large heatproof bowl, then add syrup and toss with a wooden spoon until nuts are coated and sugar begins to crystallize, about 3 minutes.
- ▶ Return nuts to skillet and cook over moderate heat, stirring constantly, until sugar coating is golden and no longer crystallized, 5 to 8 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in butter.
- ▶ Spread nuts in 1 layer in baking pan and cool to room temperature, about 20 minutes.
- ▶ When nuts are cool, transfer to a bowl,

reserving baking pan with parchment. Heat half of chocolate in a microwave-safe dish in microwave (see cooks' note, below) at 50 percent power until melted, checking frequently after 2 minutes. Add remaining chopped chocolate to melted chocolate and stir until smooth, then pour over nuts and let stand, stirring occasionally, until chocolate is almost set, 20 to 25 minutes.

- ▶ Sift 2 tablespoons cocoa powder over nuts and toss to coat.
- ▶ Return nuts to parchment-lined baking pan, separating nuts with your hands, and let stand until chocolate is completely set, about 30 minutes more.
- ▶ Toss nuts with remaining tablespoon cocoa powder.

Cooks' notes:

- We tested this recipe in an 800-watt microwave oven. If yours is less (or more) powerful, adjust the melting time accordingly.
- Chocolate-covered cashews keep in an airtight container at room temperature 3 days.

FEARING THAT WE WERE wearing out our welcome as houseguests, we gave our host a break from cooking and dined at Francesca's North, in Northbrook, Illinois. We had a delicious appetizer of lentils with greens that has haunted me ever since. I'd love to have the recipe. Can you help?

MAURA MARTIN-HAYWARD
BRIGHTON, MICHIGAN

LENTILS WITH SPINACH AND GOAT CHEESE

Adapted from Francesca's North

SERVES 6 (FIRST COURSE)

Active time: 25 min Start to finish: 1 hr

For sources for the French green lentils and mascarpone cheese, see Shopping List, page 178.

- 4 cups chicken stock or reduced-sodium chicken broth (32 fl oz)
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped (¾ cup)

- 3 carrots, finely chopped (1 cup)
- 2 celery ribs, finely chopped (½ cup)
- 2 Turkish bay leaves or 1 California
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- 1¼ cups French green lentils (10 oz)
- 2 tablespoons mascarpone cheese
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 2 lb fresh spinach, coarse stems discarded
- 3 tablespoons soft mild goat cheese (2 oz)

- ▶ Bring stock to a bare simmer in a 2- to 3-quart saucepan.
- ▶ Meanwhile, heat oil in a 4-quart heavy pot over moderately high heat until hot but not smoking, then sauté onion, carrots, celery, bay leaves, salt, and pepper, stirring occasionally, until vegetables are just golden, about 5 minutes. Add lentils and stir to coat with oil. Add stock and simmer, covered, until lentils are tender but not broken down and most of stock is absorbed, 30 to 40 minutes. Discard bay leaves and gently stir in mascarpone, then season with salt and pepper. Transfer to a serving dish and keep warm, loosely covered with foil.
- ▶ Heat butter in a 12-inch heavy skillet over moderately high heat until foam subsides, then sauté spinach, stirring and turning with tongs, until just wilted, about 2 minutes. Season spinach with salt and scatter on top of lentils. Crumble goat cheese over spinach and serve immediately.☺

CORRECTION: On page 12 of our January 2005 issue, the photo at top right showed the Hotel Yalta, not the Hotel Oreanda.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

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