



COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

Family Matters

Improving Health Together

December 2023 Newsletter

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Making Food Gifts with Children

Michael Lucero, El Paso County Extension Specialist

One of the many things I enjoy doing this time of year is working with my children to make holiday gifts. Making and giving gifts is a great way to spend time together while strengthening bonds with children. But when the gifts you make are food, it is even more fun and delicious! Every holiday season I sit down with my children and ask them what they would like to make this year for gifts. Sometimes it's a piece of art, an ornament, or potholders but this year it was holiday food!



We didn't just want to make another plate of candy or cookies but something new and easy. So, we came up with two recipes for a layered dried fruit and nut mixtures. These are very easy and beautiful gifts that you can make with children of any age. They are also gifts that are very customizable. If you don't like or cannot find an ingredient, you can easily substitute it with something you enjoy.

Using dried fruits and nuts is a healthy way to get more nutrients into your diet. Even though dried fruits are high in natural sugar, they also provide a multitude of vitamins, minerals, and fiber. They are also bright and colorful in a jar! The fat in nuts is primarily monounsaturated and considered a healthy type of fat to consume in moderation. Nuts are a good source of vitamins, minerals, and fiber. Nuts also provide that satisfying crunch to foods.

Some tips when making these holiday gifts:

- *Chop the dried fruits into smaller pieces to fit more easily into the jar.*
- *Make Substitutions:*
 - *Red: Dried cranberries or cherries*
 - *White: Coconut flakes or yogurt-covered raisins. Not a fruit, but a yummy addition in small amounts include white chocolate chips or mini marshmallows*
 - *Yellow/Gold: Dried or freeze-dried apricots, peaches, or golden raisins*

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Let's Talk

While working on this project with my children, I like to talk about how important it is to keep ourselves healthy and joyful during the holidays. I explain that spending this time together brings me joy. It is an important time just to be with each other and talk while making something that will also bring joy to others. Just spending time with a child can strengthen our connections. Working together on a project like this can create a joyful memory that will last a lifetime and will also teach them the importance of spending time with those they love.

Another point I discuss with my children is how using healthy ingredients in our gifts helps those that receive them stay healthy too. Keeping our bodies healthy will ensure we are joyful for many years to come. So, let's celebrate joy, the joy of spending time together, the joy of giving a gift to someone and the joy of keeping your bodies healthy. Let's all have a joyous holiday season!

Recipe for Health

Always start food projects by washing hands and food contact surfaces with soap and water.

Candy Cane

To make this red and white striped jar, start by layering the ingredients in the order below in a one pint or half pint wide mouth jar.

Use a funnel when adding the ingredients for easier assembly. Also, make sure to press each layer down firmly with a spoon for easy packing.

Layer in this Order:

Dried Cherries
Mini marshmallows
Dried Cranberries
Coconut flakes
Dried Cherries



Once you're done layering, close the lid and add some festive baker's twine and the printable tags.

Holiday Medley

To make the holiday medley jar, start by layering the ingredients in the order below in a one pint or half pint wide mouth jar.

Use a funnel when adding the ingredients for easier assembly. Also, make sure to press each layer down firmly with a spoon for easy packing.

Layer in this Order:

Dried Cherries
Mini marshmallows
Nuts of your choice, such as shelled pecans, walnuts, or almonds
Dried Cranberries
White Dried Fruit
Dried Cherries
Golden Raisins
Dried Apricots
Dried Blueberries



Once you're done layering, close the lid and add some festive baker's twine and the printable tags. They can pour some out in a bowl and enjoy as a snack, or a topping for yogurt or cereal!

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