



## DRYING WALNUTS

Walnuts are mature as soon as the husk can be separated from the nut easily. Usually walnuts are not harvested until the rains have cracked the husk, letting the nut drop to the ground. Gather husk-free walnuts as soon as possible after they drop, as nuts that remain on wet ground rapidly become discolored. If walnuts drop from the tree with the husk intact, leave them on the ground until the husks become loose, usually in a week or two. Then remove the husk by hand.

Once harvested, start drying walnuts within 24 hours. They can be dried in the shell or shelled and then dried. Shelling them first saves heat and drying time, but nuts generally store longer if left in the shell.

### Drying

Walnuts can be dried at home if proper air circulation and temperature is provided. Nuts can be dried in a food dryer, spread in a single layer near another heat source, or put in paper or burlap sacks and suspended in a warm room. They must be stirred or turned several times a day.

Temperatures between 95-105°F are necessary for walnuts to dry properly. At higher temperatures, it will only take a few days; lower temperature may take up to two weeks. It is important not to dry nuts at temperatures above 105°F because it lowers the quality of the nut. Check walnuts by occasionally cracking one open. Walnuts are dry when the divider between the nut halves breaks with a snap when bent. If the kernel is rubbery, it is not dry.

### Storing

Dried nuts should be stored in a cool dry place at or below 55°F. Cupboard spoilage can result from rancidity, mold, and the Indian meal moth. Shelled nuts become rancid more quickly than nuts left in the shell, so additional precautions for storage need to be taken. They can be stored for a year at refrigerator temperatures of 32-35°F, packaged in freezer-weight bags or containers.

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