

We have a large Hazel bust nearby and on Squirrels to pinch them, so at this time of year we have quite a good supply of very big nuts. They are the size of a small Conker this year. Apparently nuts have a demographic status in Chinese Cuisine?.?Peanuts = Everyman - Hazel Nuts = Middle class and thriving - Walnuts = Elite and above?. So with the idea of using Hazel Nuts as a local and free alternative to Water Chestnuts we set about pottering yesterday.

Ingredients:-

A large bowl of foraged Hazel Nuts

A hammer or Nut cracker (I used a hammer on the kitchen floor!!!!)

Bicarbonate of Soda.

Method:-

- (1) Preheat the oven to 250c.
- (2) Lay the nuts on an oven proof tray in a single layer.
- (3) Place in the oven for 20 minutes. Those which explode are the ones with no actual nut inside. Which saves you smacking them later!
- (4) Remove the tray and cool enough to be able to handle the roasted nuts.
- (5) Crack open and remove the roasted nuts and bin the shells.
- (6) Boil a small pan of water with 2 table spoon of Bicarbonate of Soda and simmer the nuts for 10 minutes. Interestingly the water turns a dark purple?..
- (7) Drain and cool.
- (8) Once cool enough to handle the brown coating will rub away with ease.

Your roasted and cleaned nuts are now good to add at the beginning of a Chinese style stirfry just after the Onions and Garlic. You can then set them aside and re-add at the end. They really do add a great flavour and crunchy texture.