

H A R L A N R I C H A R D S

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Making Granola In a Microwave

Who would ever think of trying to make granola in a microwave? Necessity is often the mother of invention. In prison, there are no conventional ovens or stoves for prisoners to use . . . but there are microwaves. If I want to make something to eat I am limited by what I can buy from the canteen and what can be cooked in a microwave.

About 5 years ago, a guy shared something with me that he made. He called it granola and although it didn't taste too bad, it was damp and mushy with terrible mouth feel. I decided I could do better so I set out to improve on his recipe. I don't remember all the twists and turns of my experiments but eventually I arrived at my present recipe which makes great granola. Here's how it's done.

Ingredients

3 pkg. instant oatmeal	1 box raisins (1/2 oz.)
1/2 pkg. graham crackers	1 cup raisin bran (separate the flakes from the raisins)
1/3 pkg. sunflower seeds (1-1/3 oz.)	4 pats of butter
1/3 pkg. peanuts (2-1/3 oz.)	20 oz. water (approximate)
1/2 cup sugar (or use honey and add less)	
Fresh fruit (optional) 1 apple peeled and diced or 1 banana cut up in small pieces.	

Instructions

Combine water, butter, sugar and fruit in a bowl and cook it in the microwave for 5 minutes (if no fresh fruit is used, cook only until it boils).

While it is boiling, crush the peanuts, graham crackers and bran flakes together in another bowl and add the oatmeal and sun flower seeds. Mix thoroughly. Add dry ingredients to wet ingredients and mix thoroughly. The mixture should be wet but not soupy (too dry and the granola won't clump up; too wet and it will take longer to cook).

Place a damp rag in the microwave. Cook the mixture for 1 minute Stir and split into 2 bowls. Cook one bowl at a time for 30 seconds and keep switching them every 30 seconds. Stir and chop up the granola every time you pull a bowl out of the microwave. Continue for about 26 minutes until pieces of mixture start to brown. Add half of the raisins to each bowl and cook in the same manner using 15 second intervals until the raisins swell up.

The damp rag helps heat up the mixture as it cooks. The reason for the switching and stirring of the bowls every 30 seconds is to break up the mixture, prevent hot spots from burning the granola, and evaporating the moisture from the granola. The damp rag helps to increase the heat going into the granola as it cooks. It can be removed when it's time to add the raisins. As the raisins heat up and swell up, they give off heat which finishes cooking the granola.

Place the bowls in front of a fan to cool off.

As an added embellishment, you can throw a handful of chocolate chips (or chopped up chocolate bars) in the granola as it cools off. Mix it in slightly. The melting chocolate will help the granola clump together.

I suppose I could make better granola with a conventional oven and better ingredients but even so, this stuff is pretty darn good - better than the granola bars they sell on canteen.

Try it and let me know how it works for you.