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Warm Sweet & Spicy Mixed Nuts

Serves 6 to 8

These nuts, adapted from a recipe in *The Union Square Café Cookbook*, are addictive. The nuts are toasted and then coated with a mixture of cayenne pepper, herbs, and brown sugar. It's best to serve these warm for maximum flavor. Offer them with drinks and watch them disappear.

1 pound raw unsalted mixed nuts (pecans, walnuts, Brazil nuts, cashews, peanuts, and hazelnuts)

1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh rosemary

2 teaspoons chopped fresh thyme

1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper

2 teaspoons dark brown sugar

2 teaspoons sea salt (I like to use Maldon)

1 tablespoon unsalted butter, cut up

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Spread out the nuts on a baking sheet and toast until golden brown, about 10 minutes.

2. In a large bowl, combine the remaining ingredients. With a big wooden spoon, stir the nuts in the herb mixture, making sure the butter melts and moving the nuts around so they are evenly coated. Transfer to a pretty bowl and let sit for 5 minutes to crisp the nuts before serving.

The Clever Cook Could . . .

Slice some seasonal fruit and arrange on a platter. Place a mound of the nuts in the center for a super-easy after-dinner or lunch treat.