

Asian-Flavored Bolled Peanuts

Description:

Boiled peanuts are a favorite snack treat in the Southeast of the USA. These are bolled peanuts, not "boiled", because in the South people pronounce it "bolled". Rather than just the usual salt (which is plenty good on its own, believe me), this is made with an Asian flavoring as a refreshing change of pace. For those who have never had the pleasure of eating bolled peanuts, once you start in on a bowl it's going to be harder to put down than a bowl of pistachios (or a president with a bucket of fried chicken...).

Ingredients:

3 gallons (11 liters) water
3 (1.3 kilograms) pounds green (unripe, unsalted, unroasted) peanuts with shells on
0.5 cup (114 grams) kosher/sea salt
3 large white onions
1 bunch scallions (aka "green onions")
8 tablespoons (114 grams) red miso paste
6 cloves garlic
0.5 cup (118 milliliters) dark soy sauce
3 teaspoons (15 milliliters) Worcestershire sauce
4 tablespoons (57 grams) black pepper
4 teaspoons (22 grams) curry powder
2 teaspoons (10 milliliters) sesame oil
8 red Asian chilis (optional)
1 pig hoof (optional)
- or -
3 medium-large oxtail bones (optional)

Procedure:

First off, it's extremely important that you start with green or unripe, unroasted, unsalted peanuts (if you can't find any in your area, try these: <http://www.amazon.com/Royal-Oak-Shell-Peanuts-Pound/dp/B001EO6BCC>). Place the peanuts in the cooking pot and cover with warm water, swirl around to loosen any dirt clinging to shells, and dump into a colander. Repeat one or more times necessary to clean peanuts. While doing this, remove any which look suspect.

Rough chop the onions then slice off the roots of the scallions very close to the bulbs. Then chop the scallions into approximately 1cm or half-inch pieces. Chop the garlic into halves or thirds depending on size.

After peanuts are clean, thoroughly rinse cook pot and put in 3 gallons (approximately 12 liters) warm water and add all the spices, onions, scallions, soy and Worcestershire sauces, the sesame oil, optional number of Asian red chilis according to your taste (recommend minimum 2 – in 3 gallons they won't be very spicy but add important flavor) and the miso paste. If this seems like a lot of salt, it is. The water has to be saltier than the ocean and boiled for a long time to punch the flavor through the shell to the legume (bean) inside. Peanuts are actually beans, not nuts. And as everyone knows the shells are pretty hardy. I use them in my compost pit to act as a spacer fiber in the next Spring's mulch in order to let water penetrate easier and not bind the roots, thereby restricting the plants' growth (sometimes our soil can be quite dense).

Place pot on high heat and let come to a rolling boil. Once the water is at a rolling boil, add the peanuts and garlic (along with either the hoof or bones depending if you want a little pork/beef flavor, or neither if you are vegetarian/vegan) then turn heat down to about medium to bring the boil down to a simmer. Let peanuts simmer for about 3 hours, checking every half-hour and adding hot water as necessary to keep level. After peanuts are done simmering (they should all be sunk to the bottom with the heat off - if a few are still floating don't sweat because you will be upon eating...), turn off heat and let peanuts soak for another 3-12 hours depending on how spicy you want your end product to be.

Drain peanuts and let cool as necessary before eating. Immediately refrigerate any uneaten product as they won't keep at room-temperature like their roasted brethren. You can use the remaining broth for a tofu marinade for another dish. Just be sure to boil it on high heat again for about 10 minutes before adding the tofu just to be certain nothing nefarious decided to colonize the cool broth (there's enough salt to make it inhospitable to most microbes but it's just good food safety to heat it and make sure). But I would strongly advise against drinking anything more than a spoon sip to check flavor. You can't drink seawater for the same reason.

Et voila! You have Asian-flavored bolled peanuts! Enjoy!

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