

Perfect Trail Mix Bites

1. Banana chip and dried cherry: The banana chip is sweet and crunchy; the cherry, soft and tart. A beautiful contrast of flavors in your mouth.
2. Dried strawberry and almond: To me, this combination is the epitome of trail mix texture. Chewy dried fruit, crunchy nut. A perfect union, and the flavors of almond and strawberry are an unexpectedly enjoyable pairing.
3. Dried pineapple and walnut: Confession: if there is dried pineapple in a trail mix, I am picking it out and eating it all, hit after sugary hit. If I'm feeling especially judicious, I will eat everything else first and save the dried pineapple as a sort of dessert. It feels like I'm rewarding myself. I fantasize that I am Polynesian royalty, laying supine on a warm sandy beach, indulging in what anyone with any taste would agree is the finest dried fruit, as my servants fan me with giant palm fronds. #bigleaves2k17 Done are the days of trekking on a trail eating peanuts! I'm a princess now. But I digress. Second confession: I don't like walnuts. While I do agree that they have an excellent and unique texture, that little bite of bitterness is such a turn-off. I find that it fills my mouth and sticks in the back of my throat, making for an overall unpleasant nut experience. So unless it's folded into some really kick-ass banana bread, I am generally not down for walnuts. However, the bitter mediocrity of a walnut does wonders to pare down the electric succulence of a dried pineapple. As a bite of trail mix, it is A-OK.
4. Raisin and peanut: I like to call this one "The PB&J." It may seem basic, but it is deeply satisfying and quite nostalgic for me. When I was a kid, I used to sandwich one raisin between two peanut halves and relish in the fact that it looked like a tiny hot dog. And then I would eat it. This is the energizer bunny of trail mix bites. You could do this for hours and keeping going and going, and it, in turn, will keep you going and going. It's a self-fulfilling prophecy.
5. Roast beef and carrots: jk
6. Almond and cashew: This one is for when you either A.) ate all the dried fruit and now you're left with a bag of nuts or B.) your employer switched from providing trail mix to *just nuts* for break room snacks (why, why, *why?*) That being said, pairing the crunchiest nut with the smoothest nut makes for a pretty good bite in the absence of fruit. I think that eating just nuts, after a while, builds character.
7. Peanut, M&M, and raisin: Also known as "The Classic" or "The Trifecta," this trail mix bite is truly ideal. We refer to someone as a "man's man" when they show outstanding success in stereotypically manly activities and are well-liked and respected by other men. This concept is becoming dated, but this is beside the point. The point is, if anything is a "trail mix bite's trail mix bite," it's peanut, M&M, and raisin. Salty peanut, sweet raisin, even sweeter chocolate. Oh yes, chocolate. What a better way to eat candy than cloaking it with the term "trail mix." But let's talk about two key issues with M&Ms in your trail mix. First, you develop a dependence on them. Once you have your first Trifecta bite, you can't possibly imagine following it up with a handful of *just raisins*. Gross! So each bite features a tasty morsel of candy-coated chocolate. But what always happens, because trail mix companies are stingy or there is some kind of constant global M&M shortage, is you run out. You run out of M&Ms, and you're left with what seems like a sad bag of dried fruits and nuts. If you started out with a bag of dried fruits and nuts, you wouldn't be disappointed, but you just had to have chocolate in there, didn't you? You gluttonous fool. The second problem with M&Ms in trail mix is there's always those fucking kids on the playground. Kids that, taken individually, might be cool and/or nice. They're always like, "can I have a piece of chocolate out of your trail mix? Pleeeease?" Sure, just one, no problem. Then the next kid wants one. You had a shortage of chocolate to begin with. Do they think chocolate grows on trees? But you're stuck being Mr. Nice Guy, sharing your M&Ms with all these damn kids, trying to keep up a facade of benevolence. And then you're left with a bag of lonely almonds and peanuts that just sits at the bottom of your backpack for a week.