

10 new ways to use peanut butter

Look, we love a good PB&J as much as the next fourth-grader, but peanut butter--creamy or crunchy, fancypants organic or supermarket Skippy--is an incredibly versatile ingredient, capable of adding heft to sauces and depth to desserts. Here are 10 ways to use it that would make George Washington Carver proud. By Teri Tsang Barrett, Bon Appétit

Peanut Butter Popcorn:

Place 8 cups air-popped popcorn in a large bowl. Line a rimmed baking sheet with waxed paper. Bring 1/2 cup honey and 1/2 cup sugar to a boil in a small saucepan, swirling pan to dissolve sugar, and cook until foamy and slightly darker in color, about 3 minutes. Add 1/2 cup peanut butter and 3/4 teaspoon salt; stir until mixture is smooth. Pour over popcorn; toss to coat. Spread out on prepared sheet. Let cool completely. Break into bite-size pieces.

Tofu Stir-Fry with Peanut Sauce:

Drain a 14-16-oz. package of firm tofu and wrap in several layers of paper towels; let drain for 20-30 minutes. Discard paper towels. Cut tofu block in half diagonally, then place both halves, cut edge down, on a cutting board. Slice each wedge lengthwise into three 1/2"-thick triangles. Season each piece lightly with salt and dredge in 1/2 cup cornstarch to coat. Heat 1/4 cup peanut oil in a 10" pan over medium-high heat until oil is hot but not smoking, 2-3 minutes. Add tofu and cook until golden, 3-4 minutes per side; transfer to a plate. Add 1 tsp. each minced garlic and ginger to the pan; stir-fry until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add 1 1/2 cups trimmed snow peas (about 1/2 lb.), 1 cup thinly sliced onion (1/2 medium onion), and 1 cup thinly sliced red and green bell peppers (each, 1/2 medium pepper). Stir-fry until crisp-tender, 2-3 minutes. In a small bowl, mix 1/4 cup peanut butter, 1/2 teaspoon toasted sesame oil, 1 tablespoon chili-garlic sauce, 2 tablespoons reduced-sodium soy sauce, and 3 tablespoons water. Add peanut butter mixture to pan and stir-fry until sauce comes together and vegetables are evenly coated. Return tofu to pan, turning to coat. Serve over brown rice and sprinkle with sliced scallions.

Pork Skewers with Peanut Sauce:

Combine 1/2 cup coconut milk, 1/2 cup peanut butter, 1 tablespoon reduced-sodium soy sauce, 1 teaspoon chopped garlic, 1 teaspoon fresh lime juice, 1/2 teaspoon salt, a pinch of crushed red pepper flakes, and 2 tablespoons water in a blender. Purée until smooth. Pour 1/2 cup peanut butter sauce into a small bowl; set aside for dipping sauce. Place 1 lb. pork tenderloin cut into 1" cubes in a medium bowl; add remaining peanut butter sauce; toss to coat. Cover and chill pork mixture for 1 hour. Soak eight 10"-12" bamboo skewers in hot tap water for 20 minutes; drain. Thread 4-6 pieces pork onto each skewer. Season pork skewers well with salt and pepper and grill 4-5 minutes per side until cooked through. Serve with reserved dipping sauce.

Rocky Road Treats:

Combine 1 1/2 cups chocolate chips, 1 1/2 cups peanut butter, and 6 tablespoons butter in a large saucepan. Cook over low heat, stirring occasionally, until melted and smooth, 8-10 minutes. Let stand until cool but not set, 15-20 minutes. Stir in 2 cups broken pretzels, 2 cups mini-marshmallows, and 1 cup roasted peanuts. Press into a buttered 8x8" baking dish and refrigerate until set, about 1 hour. Cut into 16 squares.

Roast PB Chicken:

Mix 1 tablespoon melted butter, 1 tablespoon peanut butter, and 1/4 teaspoon hot pepper sauce in a small bowl, adding more hot pepper sauce if desired. Spread mixture under the skin of a bone-in chicken breast, coating undersides of the breast as well. Season chicken liberally with salt and pepper and drizzle with 1 tablespoon olive oil. Roast breast at 425° until the chicken is cooked through, 25-30 minutes. For crispier skin, finish by broiling chicken 6" from heat for 2 minutes.

Peanut Butter-Banana Brownie Trifle:

Using an electric mixer, beat 1 cup peanut butter and one 8-oz. package cream cheese to blend. Add 1 cup powdered sugar and 1/4 cup whole milk; beat until mixture is light and creamy, adding 1 tablespoon milk if mixture is too thick. Using an electric mixer with clean, dry beaters, beat 1 1/2 cups chilled heavy cream to soft peaks in a medium bowl. Gently fold into peanut butter mixture to make a mousse. Peel and cut 8 medium bananas into thin slices. Break 1 lb. store-bought brownies into pieces to make approximately 3 cups large crumbs. Layer one-quarter of bananas in bottom of a 5x7" trifle dish or glass bowl, then top with approximately 1 cup peanut butter mousse, followed by 1 cup crumbled brownies and 1 more cup of mousse; repeat the layers twice more, ending with the bananas. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 1 hour to set.

Masamba (African-Style Greens and Potatoes):

Bring 1 1/2 lb. new red potatoes to a boil in salted water and cook until tender, 10-12 minutes. Drain, let cool slightly, and cut potatoes in half; cover and set aside. Cut center stems from 1 bunch of kale; discard stems. Coarsely chop leaves (about 8 cups loosely packed). Heat 1 tablespoon olive oil in a 10" skillet and sauté kale in 2 batches until bright green and slightly wilted, 3-4 minutes per batch. Return all kale to pan, season with salt and pepper, and add 1/2 cup low-sodium chicken broth; cook until broth has evaporated and greens are wilted, 4-5 minutes. Melt 1/3 cup peanut butter in a microwave-safe bowl. Mix in 2/3 cup store-bought spicy salsa. Toss potatoes, kale, and peanut sauce together in a large bowl and serve immediately.

Peanut Butter Slaw:

Stir 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar and 2 tablespoons sugar in a large bowl until sugar dissolves. Whisk in 1/2 cup peanut butter, 2 tablespoons vegetable oil, and 1/2 teaspoon salt. Toss with 6 cups thinly sliced Napa cabbage (about 1 lb.), 1 1/2 cups matchstick-size pieces peeled carrots (about 1 large carrot), 3/4 cup sliced scallions (3-4 scallions), and 1/3 cup chopped cilantro.

Buckeyes:

Line a rimmed baking sheet with waxed paper. Pulse 1 1/2 cups graham cracker crumbs (about 12 crackers) and 1 cup powdered sugar in a food processor until mixture is finely ground. Add 1 cup peanut butter and pulse several times to form a dry dough. Roll the dough into approximately 24 1" balls; place on prepared sheet and freeze until firm, 30-45 minutes. Place 12 oz. semisweet chocolate chips in a microwave-safe bowl. Microwave in 15-second bursts until melted, stirring until smooth. Dip peanut butter balls almost completely into melted chocolate so that a small circle of visible peanut butter resembles an eye. Remove buckeyes from chocolate with a fork, tapping tines lightly against inner edge of bowl to shake excess chocolate from balls; return buckeyes to same sheet. Freeze until set, 10-15 minutes, then transfer to refrigerator to store.

Peanut Butter Noodles:

Whisk together 1/4 cup peanut butter, 2 tablespoons reduced-sodium soy sauce, 1 tablespoon unseasoned rice vinegar, 1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil, and 1/2 teaspoon sugar in a large bowl. Add 6 oz. cooked udon or spaghetti plus 2 tablespoons pasta cooking liquid. Garnish with 2 tablespoons thinly sliced scallions, 2 tablespoons toasted peanuts, and 1/2 teaspoon chopped fresh red Thai chile or jalapeno.