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National Peanut Month Pays Homage to an American Icon

Elgin, IL -- Peanuts conjure so much vivid imagery in our national memory, from good times at ball games to favorite sandwiches and the circus. There's the sound of shells crunching under your feet, the famous "peanut gallery" to whom we all refer at times and, of course, Jimmy Carter and Thomas Jefferson, both peanut farmers of some renown.

Goober, pinder, earthnut, groundnut, and ground pea – all names for the edible seed of an annual legume. That's right, peanuts are related to peas, lentils, chickpeas and other beans. All this time you thought a vegetable never touched your lips, but if you like peanuts you like vegetables. Goober is derived from "nguba," the name for peanut in the Bantu language spoken in parts of Africa. Scientifically, peanuts are known as *Arachis hypogaea*. Say that five times fast.

Why, without peanuts there may never have been the Nobel Prize! Its namesake, scientist Alfred Nobel, amassed a fortune over his lifetime, partly from the proceeds of dynamite. His explosive invention, in turn, would be nothing without peanuts; dynamite is made from nitroglycerine, which is made from glycerol, which is made from peanut oil. You could say that peanuts are dynamite, although they won't explode.

Peanuts are, however, a dynamite snack food and cooking ingredient full of nutrients bestowed by Mother Nature and with a distinctive flavor that turns many a plain dish into a special meal.

Best of all, people love to eat them. Peanut consumption in the United States is greater than the consumption of all other nuts combined, which makes it practical for incorporation into the daily diet. And, relative to many other nuts, peanuts are economical and easy to find, like at the baseball game.

At Wrigley Field in Chicago where the Cubs play, for instance, fans ate around 50- million individual peanuts during the 2006 Major League Baseball Season, according to Fisher Nuts, a Chicago hometown brand and the Cubs' exclusive supplier.

Fisher also provides every bag of Salted-in-Shell peanuts sold inside U.S. Cellular Field, home of the 2005 World Champion White Sox. In fact, Fisher peanuts provide the crunch that goes with the munch at many MLB games.

And just a handful of peanuts a day may even help keep the doctor away.

A 2003 study by researchers at Purdue University showed that regular consumption of peanuts lowers triglycerides and improves total diet quality by increasing nutrients associated with the prevention of cardiovascular disease. The nutrients in one little peanut include magnesium, folate, vitamin E, copper, arginine and fiber. The study was published in the Journal of the American College of Nutrition.

In the study, peanut consumption led to positive changes in the fat profile of the diet – saturated fat decreased and unsaturated fat increased as a portion of calories. National guideline recommend limiting saturated fat and refined carbohydrates, while replacing them with unsaturated fats such as those found in peanuts.

In addition to being a great snack, peanuts are also a great source of fun facts.

- There are four types grown in the U.S. – Runner, Virginia, Spanish and Valencia.
- The average American consumes more than six pounds of peanuts and peanut butter each year.
- Dr. George Washington Carver, a brilliant man by any measure, developed more than 300 uses for peanuts in the early 1900s. His tireless and extensive research on the unassuming legume catalyzed the peanut industry in the U.S.
- The world's largest peanut was four inches long.
- Peanuts contribute more than \$4 billion to the U.S. economy every year.
- Adrian Finch of Australia has tossed a peanut 111 feet, 10 inches to claim his place in the Guinness Book of World Records.
- Peanuts originated in South America, probably in Brazil or Peru.
- Peanuts kept many a Civil War soldier alive, when the starved soldiers turned to it for food.
- Graves of ancient Incas found along the western coast of South America often contain jars of peanuts, which provided food in the afterlife.

All in all peanuts conjure fun, yet they come in their own handy containers and offer health benefits that would make a hamburger blush in shame. That's why there's a National Peanut Month. The humble peanut has truly made a name for itself in the United States, so much so that we tend to take it for granted. National Peanut month is the perfect time to reflect on how engrained in our culture, and how important, peanuts are. Hey, take a peanut to dinner this month. You're free to eat it afterwards.

John B. Sanfilippo & Son, Inc., founded in 1922, is a leading processor, marketer and distributor of shelled and in-shell nuts and extruded snacks that are that are sold in multiple distribution channels. Their products can be found under the company's Fisher® and Sunshine Country® brand names and under a variety of private labels.

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