

Sunflower Butter



Researchers at the ARS Southern Regional Research Center in New Orleans, LA, in collaboration with Red River Commodities, a major sunflower seed producer based in Fargo, ND, developed a process for making a sunflower butter product that resembles the flavor, texture and appearance of commercially available peanut butter. Red River Commodities came to USDA-ARS researchers Isabel Lima and Harmeet Guraya for their processing expertise. The ARS scientists were able to solve a major obstacle in processing the product after discovering that improper roasting results in poor texture, flavor and appearance. By modifying the roasting process, and controlling moisture and ingredient effects, they produced a significantly improved sunflower butter.

The beauty of this product is that it is an alternative to peanut butter for peanut allergy sufferers. According to the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, approximately 2 percent of the population suffers from peanut allergies, with symptoms ranging from a mild case of hives to severe anaphylactic shock. So, this alternative is welcome news.

Red River Commodities created SunGold Foods, Inc., a company dedicated to commercializing the sunflower product SunButter®. As a result, 25 new jobs were created in rural America.

Although Red River Commodities unveiled the new product in 2002, SunButter® has had tremendous commercial success within the last few years with its expanded product line. It is now available in a variety of flavors (creamy, organic unsweetened, natural, natural crunch and natural omega-3) and sizes, including new “go packs” designed for lunches and on-the-go snacking. The product is being sold to some of the largest U.S. food companies and retailers, such as Kroger, SuperValu, Walmart, Target, Trader Joe’s and Whole Foods, and recently through the QVC network. It can also be purchased at the company’s Website: www.sunbutter.com.

Sunflower seeds are a good source of protein, fiber, vitamin E, zinc and iron. SunButter® is currently being used in a variety of foods as an added ingredient, including in energy bars and a no-peanut peanut sauce. SunButter® is an entitlement item, and thus part of the food commodities list for the USDA National School Lunch Program.

The technology addresses one of the USDA Secretary’s top priorities—child nutrition and health—in that it promotes a healthy food alternative for children with peanut allergies. It also supports farm and rural development by increasing the value of U.S. sunflower seeds, boosting profitability for U.S. sunflower farmers.

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