

Peanut Blog

An ounce of information



The Country That Produces The Most Peanuts In The World

Much to the chagrin of those with allergies, peanuts are found all throughout our diets, and it's hard to imagine life without them. Peanut butter and jelly is the ultimate lunchbox classic, peanuts were once the most iconic airline snack, and what baseball game would be complete without some peanuts and Cracker Jack? Who knows, without Ernest Hemingway's beloved peanut and onion sandwiches to fuel his fishing trips, we might not have "The Old Man and the Sea".

Peanuts don't just provide fuel for our bodies either, as they are a source of biofuel as well. The world wouldn't be the same without peanuts, so who do we have to thank for them?

China leads the world in peanut production. According to the USDA Foreign Agriculture Service, the country accounts for 37% of the world's total peanut crop. In 2024, the nation's output was an absolutely stunning 19 million metric tonnes. The next closest contender was India, which produced 7 million metric tonnes of peanuts. The United States doesn't pop up until fourth place, trailing Nigeria. Curiously enough, none of the world's top five peanut-producing countries are anywhere close to the place where peanuts originated, but they do match the right climate.

Peanuts are actually native to South America, where they have been a part of people's diets for thousands of years. The Inca even entombed some mummies with peanuts. It wasn't until the 18th century that peanut cultivation began to spread to Africa, and Asia, spurred on by colonialism. Although most peanuts are no longer grown in their native home, the climate of Eastern and Southern Asia is actually a good match for them. Peanuts thrive in areas that are hot and humid, conditions that can be found widely in southeastern China and the Indian subcontinent.

China's peanut production is concentrated almost entirely along the country's Eastern coast. The province of Henan in the central east leads the way, responsible for over 30% of China's peanut output. The neighboring province of Shandong comes in second, producing 18% of the country's peanuts. You might assume now that your favorite brands of peanut butter are made from Chinese peanuts, but while China leads the world in peanut production, it is far from the leader in exports. According to research from World's Top Exports, India and the United States are the world's top peanut exporters. China ranks far behind as the world's seventh leading exporter. Moreover, China leads the world in peanut imports. What gives? Just look at the role peanuts play in Chinese cooking.

The role of peanuts in Chinese cuisine

Peanuts are a common ingredient in not only Chinese cooking, but Southeast Asian cuisine in general, playing a major role in the foods of Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Indonesia. In Chinese cooking, peanuts are most important for providing peanut oil. There are different varieties of peanut oil for different uses, but generally speaking, it has a high smoke point that makes it ideal for high heat cooking methods, like stir-frying in a wok. Peanut oil is the go-to oil in Chinese cookery, so much so that people with peanut allergies are widely cautioned to avoid Chinese restaurants.

Peanuts also feature in Chinese cuisine as an addition to stir-fries. It is perhaps best known for its role in the famous Sichuan dish, kung pao chicken. Peanuts are also one of the most popular snacks in China, specifically boiled peanuts. Chinese style boiled peanuts are cooked in a pot of water seasoned with classic Chinese spices like star anise, cinnamon, and dried chile. During the cooking process, some of the liquid seeps through the shells of the nuts, leaving a small pocket of flavorful juice and a uniquely tender peanut inside.

Source: <https://www.chowhound.com/1680303/country-produces-most-peanuts/>