

Winter Bird Food Recipes

by Aubrey Vaughn | November 5, 2007 |

Autumn and winter are the perfect seasons for drawing birds to your yard by providing an appetizing — and necessary — food supply. This time of year, birds are hunting for reliable food sources to prepare for dropping temperatures and dwindling natural food supplies. Establishing a popular food stop benefits both parties — you'll enjoy entertaining guests and have the satisfaction of seeing them comfortably through the winter months.

Your feathered guests need to eat from one third to three fourths their body weight every day to have the energy to look for food and keep warm in the cold weather. High-energy or "heating" foods will not only draw a larger crowd, but provide them with the extra fat and nourishment they need to replenish their stores. The bird food recipes below (all from *Bird Food Recipes*, by Rhonda Massingham Hart; Storey Communications, 1995) appeal to a variety of birds and are great for fall and winter feeding.

Fat & Sassy

2 parts suet, lard, bacon drippings or saved kitchen fat
1 to 2 parts yellow cornmeal
Dash of salt and sand
1 part fine cracked corn, mullet or hulled sunflower

Melt suet over low heat. Allow to cool and harden, then heat again. Stir in peanut butter and other ingredients, reserving some of the corn or seeds. Allow to cool somewhat and pour into molds or form into balls. Roll balls into loose corn or seed.

Hanging Heaven

3 parts suet
1 part cornmeal
1 part peanut butter
1 part brown sugar
1 part raisins, dried cherries, etc.
1 part mixed seed or broken nuts
Sprinkling of sand
1 or more coconuts, split in half

Melt suet, allow to cool, then re-melt. Stir in other ingredients. Cook until the mixture is the consistency of porridge. If too thick, add small amounts of water or milk; if too thin, add flour. Pour into coconut halves. Hang coconut halves from tree limbs or eaves.

Scrap Pie

This recipe is a great way to use up wholesome leftovers.

4 cups crumbs (bread, cookie, cake, doughnut, etc.)
4 cups kitchen scraps (noodles, meat scraps, fruit or vegetables, etc.), chopped
4 eggs
1/4 cup honey
1/2 tsp salt
1 tsp fine sand
2 cups milk
2 tbsp shortening or melted bacon fat

Grease baking pan and layer bread crumbs and scraps. Beat eggs and mix with remaining ingredients. Pour over crumbs and scraps. Cover and chill for 1 to 3 hours, then bake at 325 degrees for 1 hour. Cool and crumble to serve.

Finally, many birds scavenge roadways to find salt, minerals and sand for nutrients and the grit needed to digest their food. Offer this recipe as a safer alternative.

Crystalline

Salt
Wood ashes*

Mix salt and ashes with enough water to dissolve and pour over a large rock, stump or wood block. As the water evaporates, crystals form that attract mineral-hungry birds. (Be sure to keep the salt water away from areas that are planted with shrubs or near gardens — salinating the soil can create problems for plant growth.) *These can be fireplace ashes as long as they do not contain residues from colored (especially red) or slick paper.

Good food is just the beginning of a successful backyard bird sanctuary. Check out the [Bird Food Recipes](#) e-book by Rhonda Massingham Hart to find tips for year-round feeding, what kind of feeders to use and where to place them. Learn about planting the right shrubs and trees for birds in [Bird Feeders with Roots](#), and find tips for attracting birds in winter in [Bringin' in the Birds](#), both by Terry Krautwurst from [Mother Earth News](#).

Share your favorite bird food recipes in the comments section below.