An important part of the holiday season is kindness toward others. While we most often think of other people, why not make a treat for the wild birds living near your home? Not only will you be helping your feathered friends, these bird feeders can also be made using cookie cutters in whatever shapes you like, so they will make the trees you hang them in look extra-festive! You will need help chopping the fruit, if you are using it, and dissolving the gelatin, so ask an adult before you get started on this project.

**Ingredients**

2 cups / 300 g mixed birdseed

Instead of using 2 cups birdseed and 1 cup dried fruits and nuts, you can also skip the dried fruit and prepare this bird food recipe with 3 cups / 450 g birdseed. If using dried fruit, feel free to use whatever you have, just try to stick to the same total quantity (1 cup).

1/4 cup / 40 g raisins, chopped
1/4 cup / 35 g dried cranberries, chopped
1/4 cup / 30 g peanuts, chopped
1/4 cup / 15 g dried apples, chopped
3/4 cup / 175 ml water
3 sachets / 21 g unflavoured gelatin (Knox brand is most commonly seen in the Chateauguay Valley)
vegetable oil

**Material**

cookie sheet/baking tray
small pot/saucepan
wooden spoon or silicone spatula
skewer or chopstick

**Method**

Line your cookie sheet with the wax paper, parchment paper or silicone mat.

Brush the inside of the cookie cutters with the vegetable oil – you can also just put it on with your fingers (this step will make taking the ornaments out of the cutters much easier).

Arrange the cookie cutters on the lined cookie sheet.

Pour the water into the small pot and sprinkle the gelatin over it. Warm over medium heat until the gelatin has dissolved, which should take about 3 to 5 minutes. Stir continually to avoid burning. Once the gelatin has dissolved, remove the pot from the heat.

Stir in the birdseed, dried fruit and nuts.

Mix until the dry ingredients are completely coated in gelatin mixture – it will be easier to work with if you let it cool a bit, but don’t let it cool too much (if it seems to be getting too difficult to handle, you can warm it gently on the stovetop again).

Arrange the cookie cutters on the lined cookie sheet.

Pour the water into the small pot and sprinkle the gelatin over it.

Warm over medium heat until the gelatin has dissolved, which should take about 3 to 5 minutes. Stir continually to avoid burning. Once the gelatin has dissolved, remove the pot from the heat.

Stir in the birdseed, dried fruit and nuts.

Mix until the dry ingredients are completely coated in gelatin mixture – it will be easier to work with if you let it cool a bit, but don’t let it cool too much (if it seems to be getting too difficult to handle, you can warm it gently on the stovetop again).

Fill each cookie cutter with bird feeder mixture. Pack and press down tightly until the cookie cutter is full (making thicker ornaments mean they will hold up when you poke the holes in to run the string through).

Poke a skewer/chopstick through each ornament to make a hole for the ribbon – make sure you push it all the way through.

Let the ornaments firm up for a couple of hours or overnight.

Carefully press the ornaments out of the cookie cutters, being careful when pushing out any delicate edges.

Cut pieces of string or ribbon approximately 6 inches/15 cm long to run through the holes you have made so you can hang up the ornaments.

**Storing extra ornaments**

Like any food, birdseed ornaments can spoil over time, especially if they’re stored improperly. Store bird feeder ornaments in an airtight container or zip-top bag in a dry, cool place, away from moisture and heat. If stored correctly, birdseed ornaments should last for 4 to 6 months. Always check that older ornaments aren’t spoiled by smelling them before hanging them out for the birds (if they have spoiled, they might smell moldy or rancid).
Let it snow, let it snow

Common knowledge tells us that no two snowflakes are alike, but in the drawing below, there are in fact two that are identical – can you find them?

The Gleaner – Christmas Supplement • Le Gleaner – Cahier de Noël 2020.12.16

page 13