The principal problem in processing pistachio nuts is removing the hull; the outer covering, not the shell. It is most easily removed when the hull is fully matured, but has not yet started to harden. It can be removed by hand, using a paring knife to scrape off parts that cling.

If the nuts are permitted to remain on the tree too long, the hull becomes dried out and will adhere to the shell. This situation can be corrected by soaking the nuts for a period of time until the hull soaks up enough moisture. One way to remove it more easily is to roll the nuts together with your hands.

You will find that some of the nuts have not split their shells. This is a characteristic of pistachios. Most of these nuts will be blank inside. There is no need to try to remove the hulls from these as it will be a waste of your time and energy.

A word of caution: Nuts fresh from the trees have a high moisture content; therefore, if kept in a closed container for any length of time, mold can be a problem.

After the hull is removed, the nuts can be dried: By exposing them to the sun; in an electric oven at the lowest possible setting with the door ajar; in a gas oven with the heat of the pilot light; or in a food dehydrator set at 100°F.

If you wish to salt and roast the nuts, it is not necessary to dry them first.

Oven Roasting or Toasting

Pistachios may be roasted without the addition of salt. This is especially great for those on a low-sodium diet.

For those who prefer the addition of salt, two methods are given. When the nuts are soaked in the brine, more salt flavor will be evident. You might try both methods to find out which is preferred by your family.

1. Use 4 to 6 tablespoons salt to each quart of water. Stir until salt is dissolved. Use enough salt solution to cover the nuts.

2. For a milder salt flavor, simply agitate the nuts in the solution for 2 minutes. Drain.

3. For a saltier flavor, soak the nuts in the solution for 1 hour. Drain.

4. The nuts are roasted in an oven set at 225°F. The door should be kept ajar about 1" to allow moisture to escape.

5. Drying times:
   a. Nuts previously dried and salt-treated, as in #2, will be roasted in 45 to 60 minutes.
   b. Nuts which are still green when salt-treated, as in #2, will roast in about 1½ hours.
   c. Nuts which are soaked, as in #3, will take about 2 hours to roast.

6. When checking the crispness of the roasting nuts, be sure to let the nuts cool slightly.

7. Storage: After roasting, nuts will become rancid more rapidly. If they are to be stored for a long period, the cold air in the refrigerator or freezer will assist keeping them fresh-tasting for a longer time.