

Suet is a huge draw for jays, woodpeckers, nuthatches, titmice and chickadees.

Easy 3-Step Suet

- Melt 1 cup of suet or lard and 1 cup of peanut butter in a large saucepan on low heat. If you are using real suet, strain it through a layer of cheesecloth twice to remove contaminants before adding the peanut butter.
- Remove the mixture from the heat and add about 2 cups of mix-ins, until the consistency is a bit stiff. Use any combination of seed, peanuts, fruit or other bird treats.
- When it has cooled enough to handle, press the mixture into molds like cat food or tuna cans and refrigerate. Or get creative and use cookie cutters to make festive shapes (shown here).

LEFT: GAP PHOTOS

ESSENTIALS

BIRDSEED

You might have birdseed, another common ingredient in suet, already on hand. Black oil sunflower, thistle and white millet seed are naturally high in fat or oils and give birds the energy to thrive in winter.

LARD

All good suet mixes need a solid base. Lard (pig fat) is a convenient replacement for traditional suet (the waxy fat around sheep and cow kidneys and loins). Most supermarket lard is already rendered and strained to remove any stray pieces of meat.

QUICK OATS

Ingredients like quick oats, cornmeal and flour help with the consistency of suet cakes. They make the mixture more crumbly and easier for the birds to eat.

Make Your Own Suet

Add equal parts nutritious treats and creativity to mix up a combo your backyard birds will love. **BY RACHEL MAIDL**

PEANUTS

Super nutritious peanuts give birds a much-needed protein boost, plus they're high in fat. Be sure to use only unsalted, out of the shell peanuts in your blend.

RAISINS

Many birds eat fruit in the winter if it's readily available. Add raisins, cranberries, apples or chunks of dried fruit to your mix.

PEANUT BUTTER

Natural peanut butters are easy to melt, loaded with protein and fat, and can be used in combination with lard or beef fat as a base for your recipe. Try using crunchy peanut butter to add a nutty kick.