Recipes

Seed Bells

SEED BELLS

Ingredients
small terra-cotta pots
microwave-safe plastic wrap or plastic oven bag
length of firm wire (coat-hanger type is fine)
birdseed of your choice (measure it dry in your chosen pots to gauge amount needed)
two egg whites per cup of birdseed (or thereabouts)

Method

Beat egg whites until white and fluffy but still liquid - you're not making a meringue.

Prepare pots by lining them with microwave-safe wrap or oven bag. Bend the end of the wire that goes into the seed bell into a closed loop (so that birds and/or leg rings can't get caught on it when most of the bell has been eaten).

Mix beaten egg whites and bird seed in a bowl until all seed is coated, then spoon the mix into the prepared pots, patting it down firmly. Push the uncoiled end of the wire through center of mix in pot then out of the drainage hole until looped end rests flat on top of mixture, then push loop slightly into mixture.

Place on an oven shelf set high enough to allow wire to hang free. Cook for approximately 60 - 90 minutes in a very cool oven or longer if pots are larger size.

The important thing is not to burn the mixture and slow cooking is needed to set it firmly.

Cooked bells will slip easily from pots, peel away the plastic wrap while they're still warm but don't handle the wire until it has cooled. Using a pair of pliers, twist exposed wire end to form a hook for hanging in the aviary.
Handy tip - Sometimes if you use large seeds in your mixture, the widest part of the bell which is exposed during cooking will become slightly crumbly. This only happens for a centimeter or two, but if they are to be given away, and you want a less 'rustic' appearance, just spoon the mixture into the pot as usual, but mix another beaten egg white with seeds of last few centimeters and cook as instructed above. This extra 'adhesive' keeps the top layer very firm.

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Unique solution ID: #1160
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Last update: 31-Aug-2008 14:59

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URL: https://faq.budgiebreeders.asn.au/content/9/255/en/seed-bells.html