



January 2026 : Cardamom

Cardamom - also referred to as the “Queen of Spices” - is an aromatic spice from the ginger family with a warm, sweet, and citrusy flavor. It is native to tropical and subtropical Asia. Guatemala is the biggest producer of cardamom in the world.

There are two main types of cardamom:

Green cardamom (*Elettaria cardamomum*) is the most commonly used type and has a sweet, delicate flavor. Black cardamom (*Amomum sublatum*) has a smoky flavor. Recipes which use this type of cardamom often use the whole pod, which is then discarded before eating.



Culinary Uses: Cardamom is a versatile spice and is used in both sweet and savory dishes. Because it is so pungent, it is generally used sparingly in dishes. Cardamom is used in many Indian dishes including curries, chai, and in the spice blend for garam masala. In the Middle East, cardamom powder is used in sweet dishes and to flavor coffee and tea. It is also used in Scandinavian countries to flavor pastries and Scandinavian drinks like mulled wine and glogg.



Health Benefits: In traditional medicine, particularly in Ayurveda and traditional Chinese medicine, cardamom has been used for centuries to treat a variety of ailments. It is believed to possess warming and stimulating properties. Ayurvedic practitioners use cardamom to aid digestion, relieve gas and bloating, and alleviate nausea. It is also employed as an expectorant to clear congestion and ease respiratory problems. In some cultures, cardamom is chewed after meals to freshen breath and promote oral hygiene. It is also considered an aphrodisiac in some cultures.

Fun Facts:

The ancient Egyptians used cardamom in perfumes and incense, and it was also employed in embalming rituals. According to legend, Mark Antony was lured to Cleopatra’s palace by the sultry aroma of burning cardamom.



Cardamom is one of the most expensive spices by weight - hence the nickname “Queen of Spices”. It is harvested by hand, which is incredibly labor intensive and contributes to its high price.

BUTTERNUT SQUASH SOUP

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Total Time: 40 minutes

Yield: 6 cups

Ingredients

- 2 Tbsp. olive oil, divided
- 1 medium butternut squash, about 3 lbs.
- 1 sweet onion, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 3-4 c. vegetable or chicken broth
- 6 sage leaves, julienned
- 1 tsp. fresh thyme
- 1 tsp. fresh ginger, grated
- ½ tsp. ground cardamom
- ¼ cup white wine or marsala wine (optional)
- 3 Tbsp. cream cheese
- ½ tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. white or black pepper



Instructions:

1. Preheat the oven to 400° Fahrenheit.
2. Cut the ends of the butternut squash with a sharp chef knife. Remove the pulp and the seeds with a spoon.
3. Brush 1 tsp of olive oil all over the flesh of the butternut squash and season with salt and pepper.
4. Place the halves of the butternut squash on a baking sheet face down, and bake for 30 minutes or until fork-tender.
5. Heat 1 tbs of olive oil at medium-high heat. Add the onion, sauté for a couple of minutes, add salt, pepper, and garlic. Stir and add thyme and sage. Cook until fragrant and onion is translucent. Add the wine, if using, to deglaze the pan and remove the bits of the bottom.
6. Place the onion mixture in the blender, scoop the roasted butternut squash, and add the broth. Process for a few seconds and add cream cheese, fresh ginger, and cardamom. Taste and adjust salt and pepper if necessary. If using an immersion blender, add the broth, scoop the butternut squash into the large saucepan. Add the freshly grated ginger, cardamom, and cream cheese. Process until smooth or until you obtain the desired consistency. Taste and adjust salt and pepper if necessary.
7. Transfer the soup to the pan and reheat when ready to serve.

This soup is delicious as is or even better if served with a swirl of plain yogurt, pepitas (pumpkin seeds), sunflower seeds, and croutons or crusty bread

MUGHLAI CHICKEN



Prep Time: 20 minutes

Total Time: 30 minutes

Servings: 6

Ingredients:

- $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp. ground cardamom
- 10 garlic cloves, peeled
- 6 whole cloves
- 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. fresh ginger, chopped
- 1 Tbsp. almonds
- 1 Tbsp. salted cashews
- 1 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 6 small red onions, halved and sliced
- 4 jalapeno peppers, seeded and finely chopped
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup canola oil
- 3 Tbsp. water
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. boneless skinless chicken breast, cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ inch cubes
- 1 c. coconut milk
- 1 c. plain yogurt
- 1 tsp. ground turmeric
- fresh cilantro
- optional: cooked rice or naan for serving

Directions:

1. Put cardamom, garlic, cloves, ginger, almonds, cashews, and cinnamon in a food processor. Process until blended
2. In a large skillet, sauté onions and jalapenos in oil until tender. Stir in water and the garlic mixture. Add the chicken, milk, yogurt and turmeric. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer, uncovered, until chicken juices run clear, 8-10 minutes. Sprinkle with cilantro. Serve with naan or rice if desired.

Nutrition Facts:

- 1 cup: 367 calories, 23g fat (10g saturated fat), 68mg cholesterol, 93mg sodium, 14g carbohydrate (5g sugars, 3g fiber), 27g protein.

MULLED WINE



Prep Time: 15 minutes

Total Time: 30 minutes

Servings: 5

Ingredients:

- 1 bottle (750ml) fruity red wine
- 1 c. brandy
- 1 c. sugar
- 1 medium orange, sliced
- 1 medium lemon, sliced
- $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp. ground nutmeg
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. ground cardamom
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. whole allspice
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. anise seed
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. whole peppercorns
- 3 whole cloves

Directions:

1. In a large saucepan, combine the first 7 ingredients. Place remaining spices on a double thickness of cheesecloth. Gather corners of cloth to enclose spices; tie securely with string. Place in pan.
2. Bring to a boil, stirring occasionally. Reduce heat; simmer gently, covered, 20 minutes. Transfer to a covered container; cool slightly. Refrigerate, covered, overnight.
3. Strain wine mixture into a large saucepan, discarding fruit and spice bag; reheat. Serve warm. Garnish, if desired, with orange slices, star anise or additional cinnamon sticks.

Check Out These Cookbooks!

These cookbooks all contain recipes with herbs from this month's kit. Did you know that we have over 350 cookbooks in our collection? Explore recipes from many different countries and cuisines!

Start Here: Instructions for Becoming a Better Cook

By Sohla El- Waylly

Location in library:
641.3 ELW



What's for Dessert: Simple Recipes for Dessert People

By Claire Saffitz

Location in library:
641.86 SAF



Indian-ish: recipes and antics from a modern American family

By Priya Krishna

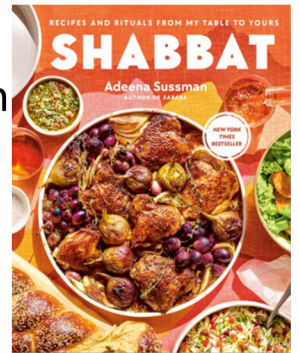
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Shabbat: Recipes and Rituals from My Table to Yours

By Adeena Sussman

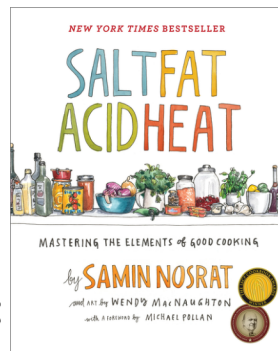
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Salt, Fat, Acid, Heat: the Four Elements of Good Cooking

By Samin Nosrat

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