

Spices



Spices are the roots, barks, seeds, flowers, fruits, and buds of certain tropical plants, and they add great, low-calorie flavor to foods. You can store dried spices in a cool, dry place for up to one year. Read on to learn about some of the many different spices you can use for cooking.

Cayenne

Also called “red pepper,” cayenne is a fine powder made from dried red chilies. Its hot, pungent flavor works well in chicken, pork, and seafood dishes; soups (like black bean); dips (like hummus); pizza; chili; and stew. When cooking with cayenne, start with a small amount (even just a pinch has a lot of heat). Then taste the food and add a little more cayenne if you wish to boost the flavor.

Chili Powder

Chili powder is a blend of dried chilies, garlic, oregano, cumin, coriander, and cloves. Use it in Mexican dishes and to season chili, steak, hamburgers, chicken, and fish.

Cinnamon

Cinnamon is the inner bark of a tropical evergreen tree. It is sold as sticks or powder. You can use cinnamon powder in sweet dishes or sprinkle it on oatmeal and other hot cereals. Use cinnamon sticks to flavor savory dishes like stews or curries that take longer to cook.

Cumin

Cumin is the seed of a small plant in the parsley family. It is available as whole seeds or as powder. Cumin has an earthy, nutty flavor and is typically used in Mexican, Middle Eastern, Asian, and Indian cuisines.

Curry Powder

Curry powder is a blend of up to 20 spices, herbs, and seeds. Most blends include chilies, cinnamon, cloves, cumin, fennel seed, and turmeric. Some are mild in flavor; others are

quite hot. Curry powder is traditionally used in Indian dishes. You can also use it to liven up burgers, steak, chicken, seafood, and lamb.

Ginger

Fresh ginger looks like a knobby root with grayish-tan skin and pale flesh. The flesh should be moist and firm, not dry and stringy. You can also buy dried ginger powder.

Ginger has a sweet yet slightly spicy flavor. Use grated or finely chopped fresh ginger in Asian and Indian dishes, such as curries, stir-fries, and soups. Ginger powder adds flavor to stewed or baked fruit desserts and to spiced cookies.

Nutmeg

Nutmeg is a grayish-brown seed with a delicate, sweet, and spicy flavor. It is sold as whole seeds and as ground powder.

Use nutmeg in baked goods, meat dishes, eggnog, apple cider, and creamy foods like custards. It also tastes good with fruits and many vegetables (like spinach, sweet potato, and squash). A little nutmeg adds a lot of flavor, so start by adding just a pinch or two.

Paprika

Paprika is a powdered spice made from sweet red pepper pods. Its flavor can range from mild to hot and spicy. Some paprika is smoked. Read labels to learn which kind you are buying. Use paprika to add zing to seafood, beef, chicken, and pork dishes.

Pepper

Both black and white pepper come from the same plant. Black peppercorns were picked before fully ripening. White peppercorns fully ripen before they are harvested. Black pepper has a warm flavor and aroma. White pepper is milder in taste. You can buy whole peppercorns or ground pepper. Use pepper in a wide variety of dishes, such as soups, stews, chicken, beef, pork, lamb, and vegetables.

