



**Recipes to Spice
Up Your Life**

The Wannabe Cook

Introduction

For me, cooking has never been just about food. It has always been about **slowing down**, letting the aroma of spices fill the room, and **remembering the kitchens I grew up in**. The sound of onions sizzling, the scent of cinnamon drifting through the air, the way a simple dish could gather family and friends around the table—these moments shaped how I see food: as connection, memory, and love.

When I created **The Wannabe Cook**, I wanted to share that feeling—the way a pinch of cinnamon can bring warmth, or how a bay leaf quietly deepens a broth. These 8 spices—cloves, cardamom, coriander, cumin, cinnamon, bay leaves, mace, and nutmeg—are at the heart of my own journey, passed down through traditions and everyday meals. **Each one holds a story, and together they create flavors that are timeless and universal.**

This book is more than a collection of recipes—it's an invitation to pause and **cook with intention**. To discover the joy of mindful cooking, to embrace the wellness that comes from simple, nourishing meals, and to create your own traditions around the table. **My hope is that as you explore these dishes**, you'll not only learn to use spices with confidence, but also **find small rituals** that bring comfort and joy into your everyday life.

So from my kitchen to yours—
let's take this journey one spice, one dish, one shared story at a time.
— Sunita Yousuf



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Bay Leaf

The bay leaf, primarily sourced from the bay laurel tree (*Laurus nobilis*) native to the Mediterranean, is a powerfully aromatic herb used globally in cooking. Also known as sweet bay or Grecian laurel, its distinct flavor is perfect for infusing soups and sauces. Most commonly sold as dried whole leaves, bay leaves are a staple in spice aisles.



A Rich History:

- **Ancient Roots:** Cultivated since ancient times in the Mediterranean, particularly Greece, bay leaves were valued for culinary, symbolic, and medicinal uses.
- **Symbol of Honor:** In ancient Greece and Rome, they symbolized wisdom, protection, and victory, used to crown athletes and scholars. The term "baccalaureate" even derives from the Latin for laurel berry, signifying academic achievement.
- **Culinary Staple:** Widely used in Mediterranean cuisine, bay leaves add depth to soups, stews, sauces, and braises. They're typically added whole and removed before serving.
- **Spread and Cultivation:** From the Mediterranean, bay laurel cultivation spread worldwide through trade, making it a versatile ingredient in many cuisines today.

Nutritional and Medicinal Insights:

Bay leaves are a good source of Vitamins A and C, and rich in folic acid, niacin, pyridoxine, pantothenic acid, and riboflavin. The essential oils give them their characteristic eucalyptus and menthol aroma, and were traditionally used for soothing stomach issues and coughs.

Fun Facts:

- **Folklore and Superstition:** In some cultures, bay leaves were believed to ward off evil spirits and bring good luck. Placing a bay leaf under your pillow was thought to induce prophetic dreams.
- **Treating Wounds:** Studied for its ability to reduce inflammation in the wound area, older experiments conducted on rats, found bay leaves to assist with wound healing.
- **Insect Repellent:** Bay leaves can be placed in pantries or storage containers to deter insects such as ants, moths, and cockroaches.

To learn more and find recipes incorporating bay leaves, visit thewannabecook.com/bay-leaf/

Cardamom

Cardamom, often called the "Queen of Spices," is native to the tropical rainforests of the Western Ghats in southern India. It grows wild across India, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Nepal, and Bangladesh, and has been cultivated for centuries, playing a vital role in Indian cuisine, Ayurvedic medicine, and historical trade.



A Rich History:

- **Geographical Roots:** Cardamom's birthplace is the biodiverse Western Ghats, an ideal habitat for its wild growth.
- **Ancient Cultivation:** Indigenous communities in India and neighboring regions began cultivating cardamom thousands of years ago for cooking, medicine, and religious rituals.
- **Global Trade:** Cardamom was a valuable commodity in ancient spice trade routes, connecting India with the Middle East and Europe.
- **Modern Production:** Today, India and Guatemala are the primary cultivators and exporters, particularly of green cardamom, with Sri Lanka and Tanzania also contributing.

Nutritional and Medicinal Insights:

Rich in essential oils and antioxidants, cardamom supports digestive health, offers anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial properties, and may aid oral health, heart health, diabetes management, and respiratory relief.

Fun Facts:

- **Queen of Spices:** Cardamom is often referred to as the "Queen of Spices" due to its pleasant aroma and versatile culinary uses.
- **Varieties:** Green cardamom is more common and prized for its delicate flavor, while black cardamom has a smoky flavor and is used in savory dishes.
- **Costly Spice:** Cardamom is one of the most expensive spices by weight, after saffron and vanilla. Its high price reflects its labor-intensive cultivation and harvesting process.
- **Chewing Gum:** In some cultures, cardamom seeds are chewed as a natural breath freshener and digestive aid, similar to how people use mint or fennel seeds.

To learn more and find recipes that use Cardamom, visit thewannabecook.com/cardamom/

Cinnamon

Cinnamon is an aromatic spice derived from the bark of small evergreen trees native to Southeast Asia. These trees, which can grow up to 66 feet, produce fragrant bark, leaves, yellowish-green flowers, and small berries. The bark is harvested, dried, and commonly ground into powder or rolled into strips for culinary use in both sweet and savory dishes.



A Rich History:

- **Ancient Use:** Cinnamon has been used since ancient times, dating back over 4,000 years. It was highly prized in ancient Egypt and used in embalming rituals and as a flavoring agent.
- **Cultivation and Trade:** Arab traders brought cinnamon from South Asia to the Middle East and Europe, where it became highly sought after during the Middle Ages.
- **Dutch Control:** During the colonial period, the Dutch East India Company (VOC) held a monopoly on the cinnamon trade in Sri Lanka and established control over cinnamon production. This led to conflicts and wars, highlighting the spice's economic importance.
- **Modern Production:** Today, Sri Lanka remains a major producer of Ceylon cinnamon, and Indonesia and China are significant producers of cassia cinnamon.

Nutritional and Medicinal Insights:

Cinnamon is a powerhouse of antioxidants, which combat oxidative stress and inflammation, supporting overall cellular health and potentially reducing the risk of chronic diseases like heart disease, diabetes, and certain cancers. It notably improves insulin sensitivity and lowers blood sugar levels, making it beneficial for managing diabetes. Cinnamon also boasts antimicrobial properties for gut and skin health, may support heart health by managing cholesterol and blood pressure, and shows promising neuroprotective effects against diseases like Alzheimer's.

Fun Facts:

- **Aphrodisiac:** Cinnamon has been historically considered an aphrodisiac and was used to enhance love potions and as a romantic spice.
- **Symbol of Wealth:** In ancient times, cinnamon was considered a symbol of wealth and luxury. It was used in perfumes, incense, and as a gift to monarchs and gods.

To learn more and find recipes that use Cinnamon, visit thewannabecook.com/spice-cinnamon/

Cloves

Cloves come from the flower buds of an evergreen tree that is native to the North Moluccas Islands in Indonesia. Clove trees grow to about 26-40 feet and flower after about 6 years. The tree becomes fully mature in 20 years and can bear fruit for more than 80 years.



A Rich History:

- **Geographic Origin:** Cloves are native to the Maluku Islands in Indonesia. Known as the Spice Islands, they were the only source of cloves for many centuries.
- **Trade and Exploration:** During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, cloves were one of the most sought-after spices in Europe. They were very valuable and during the Age of Exploration, driving European exploration and trade routes to the Spice Islands.
- **Cultivation:** Initially, clove cultivation was tightly controlled by the Dutch East India Company during the 17th and 18th centuries. Later, clove cultivation spread to other tropical regions with suitable climates, such as Zanzibar, Madagascar, and parts of India.
- **Modern Production:** Today, Indonesia remains the largest producer of cloves, followed by countries like Madagascar, Tanzania, Sri Lanka, and India.

Nutritional and Medicinal Insights:

Cloves are full of antioxidants that combat oxidative stress and inflammation, potentially easing conditions like arthritis. Their antimicrobial properties make them excellent for oral health, fighting bacteria and fungi, and are commonly used to relieve toothaches and gum inflammation. Cloves also act as a natural digestive aid, support respiratory health, help regulate blood sugar and insulin function, and contribute to cardiovascular health by improving circulation and managing blood pressure and cholesterol.

Fun Facts:

- **Medieval Currency:** During the Middle Ages, cloves were so highly valued in Europe that they were used as a form of currency and were even given as gifts and dowries.
- **Etymology:** The name "clove" is derived from the Latin word "clavus," which means nail. This is due to the shape of the dried clove buds resembling small nails or tacks.

To learn more and find recipes that use Cloves, visit thewannabecook.com/cloves/

Coriander

Coriander seeds are widely cultivated and used in cuisines across Asia, Europe, and the Americas. They add a distinctive citrusy and slightly peppery flavor to dishes. The plant itself, known as cilantro or Chinese parsley, is also valued for its leaves, which are used fresh as an herb in many culinary traditions.



A Rich History:

- **Geographic Origin:** Coriander is believed to have originated in the Eastern Mediterranean region. Ancient Egyptians were known to use coriander seeds in cooking and medicine as early as 1550 BCE, and they spread to other parts of the world through trade routes.
- **Trade and Exploration:** Coriander seeds spread across Europe and Asia through trade routes established by civilizations such as the Greeks, Romans, and Arabs.
- **Cultural Significance:** Coriander seeds are mentioned in ancient religious texts and have been associated with rituals and traditions in various cultures.
- **Modern Usage:** In contemporary cuisine, coriander seeds are used in a variety of ways, and are often toasted or ground to release their aromatic oils before being added to dishes.

Nutritional and Medicinal Insights:

Coriander seeds are a great digestive aid, stimulating enzymes to ease indigestion, bloating, and gas. They are also notable for their role in cholesterol management, potentially lowering "bad" LDL cholesterol while raising "good" HDL. For those concerned about blood sugar, they may help regulate levels by boosting insulin secretion. Their antimicrobial properties fight off infections, while their antioxidants protect cells from damage.

Fun Facts:

- **Dual Identity:** Coriander seeds are the dried fruit of the coriander plant, which is also produces cilantro or coriander leaves. While the leaves and seeds may come from the same plant, they have distinctly different flavors.
- **Culinary Pairings:** Coriander pairs well with other spices like cumin, turmeric, and ginger. They are often used in spice blends such as garam masala, curry powder, and harissa.

To learn more and find recipes that use Coriander, visit thewannabecook.com/cloves/

Cumin

Cumin is a spice derived from the dried seeds of the *Cuminum cyminum* plant, a member of the parsley family. Cumin seeds are a key ingredient in spice blends like curry powder and chili powder, and add a distinct earthy and warm flavor to dishes.



A Rich History:

- **Geographic Origin:** Cumin seeds originate from the Mediterranean region and are also widely cultivated in the Middle East, India, and parts of Asia.
- **Ancient Use:** Used since ancient times, there is evidence of their cultivation and consumption found in archaeological sites dating back to ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia.
- **Global Spread:** During the Middle Ages, it became popular in Europe, where it was used in cooking and also as a preservative for meats. It was brought to the Americas by European colonizers and eventually was integrated into Latin American and Caribbean cuisines.
- **Modern Usage:** Today, cumin seeds are widely used across the world, particularly in Indian, Middle Eastern, Mexican, and North African cuisines.

Nutritional and Medicinal Insights:

Cumin is rich in antioxidants and has anti-inflammatory properties that helps to combat oxidative stress and inflammation, supporting overall cellular health. It also may promote weight loss by boosting metabolism, exhibits antimicrobial properties to fight infections, and contributes to bone health with essential minerals. Emerging research also points to its potential in enhancing cognitive function and benefiting skin health.

Fun Facts:

- **Distinct Flavor:** Cumin seeds have a warm, earthy, and slightly peppery flavor with hints of citrus and anise, making it a popular choice to incorporate in both savory and sweet dishes.
- **Coffee Substitute:** During World War II, when coffee was scarce, roasted cumin seeds were sometimes used as a substitute in Europe.
- **Symbolism and Folklore:** Ancient Greek and Romans used cumin seeds to ensure success and prosperity, as well as to ward off evil spirits and protect against witchcraft.

To learn more and find recipes that use Cumin, visit thewannabecook.com/cloves/

Mace

Mace is derived from the nutmeg tree, which also produces the spice, nutmeg. Mace is the reddish-orange, lacy covering (aril) that surrounds the nutmeg seed inside the fruit of the nutmeg tree. After it is harvested and dried, it can be used in its whole form or ground into a powder.



A Rich History:

- **Geographic Origin:** Mace can be traced back to the East Indies, particularly the Molucca Islands (also known as the Spice Islands), which are located in Indonesia.
- **Historical Value:** Like nutmeg, mace was highly prized during the Middle Ages and Renaissance periods. It was considered valuable not only for its culinary uses but also for its medicinal properties, including its reputation as a digestive aid.
- **Modern Usage:** Today, Mace is used to add depth and complexity to regional cuisines around the world, including Indian, Middle Eastern, and European cuisines.

Nutritional and Medicinal Insights:

Mace is a known digestive aid, stimulating enzymes to ease bloating and gas. Rich in antioxidants and boasting anti-inflammatory properties, mace helps protect cells and reduce inflammation. For oral health, it can relieve toothaches and combat bacteria. Mace may also support cognitive function due to neuroprotective compounds and has shown antimicrobial effects against certain bacteria and fungi in lab studies.

Fun Facts:

- **Unique Flavor:** Mace has a slightly sweeter and more delicate flavor than nutmeg. It is often described as warm, nutty, and aromatic in taste with hints of pepper and cinnamon.
- **Culinary Uses:** Mace pairs well with fruits, baked goods, sauces, soups, and meat dishes. It is a common ingredient in spice blends such as curry powder and garam masala.
- **Symbolism:** In some cultures, mace has symbolic significance. For example, in Hindu rituals, mace is associated with purity and is sometimes used in religious ceremonies.

To learn more and find recipes that use Mace, visit thewannabecook.com/mace/

Nutmeg

Nutmeg is not a nut but a seed of the Myristica plant. The fragrant nutmeg plant produces a golden-hued, apricot-like fruit. Nutmeg is a versatile spice that adds warmth and depth to both sweet and savory dishes. When using nutmeg, it's best to use it sparingly as its flavor can be quite potent.



A Rich History:

- **Geographic Origin:** The nutmeg tree is native to the Banda Islands, which are part of the Maluku Province of Indonesia.
- **Historical Trade:** Nutmeg is among the earliest spices traded in history. As the early spice trade developed along what we now call the Silk Road, nutmeg traveled from those small Indonesian Islands to become a beloved spice heavily used by cultures around the world.
- **Spread:** In the 18th century, nutmeg cultivation spread to regions such as Grenada in the Caribbean. Today, countries including India, Malaysia, and Sri Lanka also cultivate nutmeg.

Nutritional and Medicinal Insights:

Nutmeg is known to support digestive health, easing discomfort like bloating and gas. With anti-inflammatory compounds, it can help reduce bodily inflammation. Nutmeg also shows promise for brain health, potentially improving cognitive function and offering neuroprotective effects. Topically, its oil may provide pain relief for muscles. Furthermore, nutmeg exhibits antimicrobial activity against some bacteria and fungi, and may benefit heart and dental health.

Fun Facts:

- **Lengthy Process:** It takes six to eight weeks of drying in order to prepare the nutmeg seed to be used as a spice.
- **Dual Spice:** Nutmeg is both a spice and a hallucinogen. Consuming large amounts of it can produce hallucinogenic effects due to the compound myristicin, which can be dangerous.
- **Symbolism:** Nutmeg has been used symbolically in various cultures. It was often given as a gift and represented wealth, fertility, and good luck.
- **Historical Value:** In the 17th century, nutmeg was worth more by weight than gold, leading to intense competition among European powers to control its production and trade.

To learn more and find recipes that use Nutmeg, visit thewannabecook.com/nutmeg



Recipes That Will Spice Up Your Life



Homemade Baked Beans with Easy Artisan Bread

Prepare Time
15 Minutes

Cook Time
45 Minutes

Serves
4 Servings

Ingredients

For baked beans:

- 1 teaspoon olive or vegetable oil
- 1 red onion
- 1 clove garlic
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 1 teaspoon coriander seeds
- 2-3 cardamom pods
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 400g kidney or white beans
- 400g tinned tomatoes, diced

For bread:

- 3 cups flour
- 2 teaspoon active yeast
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 ½ cups water

Baked beans and toast are a staple in many places around the world including England, Australia and New Zealand! This is a fancier, spicier, more robust version of the store bought beans that uses the perfect amount of whole spices.

The artisan bread is the easiest, no knead, fancy-looking bread you can possibly make. You just mix all the ingredients together, allow to rise, then shape and cook in a dutch oven or cast iron casserole pot for best results. Beans and bread, made from scratch, are so much better than you can get in the shop!

The spices really turn these baked beans into something special. They're not spicy, but have plenty of flavor, but you can switch up the spices a bit if there's one you don't like/have. Use crushed and sieved tomatoes for a smoother sauce, but if you have fresh or diced that's fine too!

Continued... Homemade Baked Beans with Easy Artisan Bread

Instructions

1. Prepare the bread dough ahead of time: Mix everything together in an extra-large bowl. The mixture will be wet and not kneadable, but not too runny. Set in a warm place to rise for 2-3 hours, covered with plastic wrap or a tea towel until doubled in size.
2. To make the bread: preheat oven to 450 F and place a large dutch oven or high heat-resistant cast iron pot inside. Heat for 15 minutes.
3. Tip the dough onto a large sheet of baking paper and shape into a ball as best you can.
4. Remove the pot quickly from the oven. Remove lid and using the baking paper as handles, drop the bread inside the pot, place lid back on and return to the oven.
5. Bake 20 minutes, then remove the lid and bake another 15 until nice and golden and crunchy.
6. Cool slightly before serving with the beans and plenty of butter.
7. To make the beans: Dice onion and garlic, drain and rinse the beans.
8. In a dry skillet over a medium heat, place the cumin and coriander seeds and coriander pods and brown, stirring occasionally to not burn.
9. Heat 1 teaspoon oil in a large skillet and add the onion. Cook until starting to soften and add garlic. Cook a further 30 seconds.
10. Add tomatoes and tomato paste and mix well. Bring to a simmer. Add the bay leaves, cinnamon stick, cloves and toasted spices. Cook 5-6 minutes until mixture is starting to thicken.
11. Add the beans and mix well, cook a further 5 minutes. Remove the bay leaves. Cinnamon stick and any stray cloves.
12. Serve the beans on the bread or toast, or over rice.





Spiced Baked Eggs and Yogurt Sauce

Prepare Time

15 Minutes

Cook Time

10 Minutes

Serves

2-4 Servings

Ingredients

- 4 large free range eggs
- 400g tinned tomatoes, crushed and sieved (aka tomato passata)
- 2 Tbsp Olive oil
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 1 Tbsp Tomato paste
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 1 teaspoon cloves
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 cup thick Greek or plain yogurt
- ½ lemon, juiced
- Salt and pepper
- Grind nutmeg

Baked eggs is actually the name for a dish that consists of eggs cooked in a spiced tomato sauce and topped with your choice of toppings and a delicious yogurt sauce.

For this recipe, combine cumin, bay leaves, cinnamon and whole cloves and cook in the tomato sauce for a wonderful rich and flavorful sauce. Then cook the eggs to your liking (can be soft and runny or harder) and serve with the yogurt for a fantastic cafe-style meal at home. Remember, by toasting the seeds before grinding them, you get a stronger and better flavor!

The yogurt sauce is completely customisable, add a few toasted and crushed coriander or cumin seeds and a squeeze of lime for a zingier sauce. You can also add pickled vegetables, feta cheese, spring onion or some rocket or spinach leaves to the top when serving.

Continued... Spiced Eggs and Yogurt Sauce

Instructions

1. In a dry pan over a medium heat, toast the cumin seeds and cloves lightly, being careful not to burn, about 2-3 minutes. Place into a mortar and pestle and grind into a powder.
2. Heat oil over medium heat in a large fry pan, add onion and cook until soft. Add tomato paste, salt, tomatoes, ground spices, cinnamon stick and bay leaves. Lower heat and simmer for 5 - 10 minutes until thick.
3. Remove bay leaves and cinnamon stick. Make four small indentations in the tomato mixture with the back of a spoon, then crack an egg into each hole.
4. Cover pan with a lid and cook until eggs are done to your liking (soft and runny about 4-5 mins or firm & hard 6=7 mins).
5. To make yogurt sauce: in a small bowl, add yogurt and squeeze of lemon. Using a micro plane grater, grate a little bit of nutmeg over and stir well. Taste and adjust seasoning if needed.
6. To serve: Add a dollop of the yogurt sauce to a plate and top with a scoop of the eggs and tomatoes. Serve with crusty bread.





Spiced Beef Layered Pasta Bake

Prepare Time

15 Minutes

Cook Time

35 Minutes

Serves

4-6 Servings

Ingredients

- 400 grams dried penne pasta
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 400g beef mince
- 1 onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, grated/minced
- 400 grams tinned diced tomatoes
- 2-3 bay leaves
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1 teaspoon coriander seeds
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 2-3 cardamom pods
- 1 teaspoon salt, to taste
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 1 cups milk
- Nutmeg, ¼ teaspoon ground
- 1 cup grated cheddar cheese
- Salt and pepper to taste

A tomato-based beef mixture spiced with bay leaves, cinnamon sticks and toasted cumin and coriander seeds for a rich and hearty sauce. This is then layered with pasta and a bechamel sauce and plenty of cheese and baked to golden perfection!

This is a spiced, more flavorful version of a lasagne, with plenty of warmth and comfort. Plus, it's an all-in-one dish, you get the vegetables, meat and carbohydrate all in one, so no need to serve with sides.

You'll simmer the beef and spices together to make sure every bite of this is super tasty! There's also a pinch of nutmeg in the bechamel sauce and on top, but be careful not to add too much as fresh nutmeg goes a long way!

Continued... Beef Layered Pasta Bake

Instructions

1. Bring a pot of water to a boil, add salt, and cook pasta according to package directions. Drain and set aside
2. Preheat oven to 400F.
3. In a large frypan, heat oil over a medium-high heat. Add the onion and garlic and cook 4-5 minutes until softened. Add the tinned tomatoes, all the herbs and a sprinkle of salt. Mix well and turn heat down. Simmer 20 minutes until everything is reduced down and thickened.
4. Make the bechamel: Heat butter over a medium heat in a saucepan. Add flour and whisk, cooking 2 minutes. Slowly drizzle in milk, whisking constantly and heating until thickened. Season with salt and pepper and a grating of fresh nutmeg.
5. Arrange the $\frac{1}{3}$ pasta in the dish so all the penne are mostly facing the same direction. Add $\frac{1}{3}$ of meat mixture then repeat, finishing with a layer of meat. Pour bechamel over the top and sprinkle with grated cheese and a little extra nutmeg.
6. Bake 30 minutes until cheese is golden.
7. Cool 15 minutes to set then serve!





Spiced Lamb and Halloumi Pita Pockets

Prepare Time
20 Minutes

Cook Time
15 Minutes

Serves
4 Servings

Ingredients

- 350g lamb rump
- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 2-3 cardamom pods
- 2 teaspoons cumin seeds
- 1 teaspoon coriander seeds
- 1 tablespoon sesame seeds
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon cracked black pepper
- 150 grams halloumi cheese
- 4 large or 8 small pita breads
- 1 cup shredded salad ingredients of choice (claw mix, lettuce, spinach etc)

These lamb and halloumi pitas are a quick and easy option for lunch or dinner. They're made with lamb rump rubbed with a whole spice blend and served with gooey, squeaky halloumi cheese inside soft pita bread.

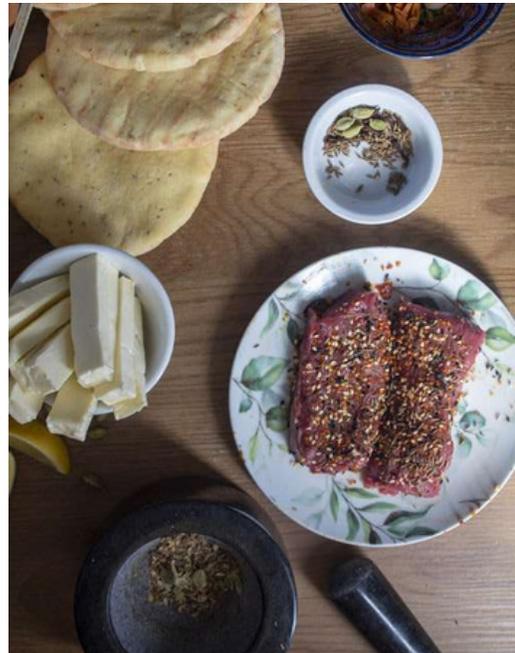
The lamb spice rub contains cardamom, cumin and coriander seeds, toasted until golden then ground together with a mortar and pestle. Delicious!

To get the best flavor when using cardamom pods and the coriander and cumin seeds, crush them gently with the back of your spoon as they cook to release the flavor. The lamb goes perfectly with these spices, and add some fresh garden salad for a different texture.

Continued... Spiced Lamb and Halloumi Pita Pockets

Instructions

1. Toast the cardamon, cumin and coriander seeds in a dry frypan over a medium heat until fragrant. Tip into a mortar and pestle and grind well, removing the pods from the cardamom.
2. In a small bowl add the crushed spices, sesame seeds, salt and pepper and mix well. Drizzle a little oil over the lamb rumps and coat in the spices, pressing them on as best you can.
3. Heat a drizzle of oil in a large frypan over a medium-high heat. Once sizzling, add the lamb and cook 3-4 minutes. DO NOT turn yet!. Once a nice brown crust has formed, the lamb should be easy to lift up with tongs. When this happens, flip to the other side and cook 3-4 minutes.
4. Remove to a plate and rest 5 minutes before slicing.
5. Wipe out then return the pan to the heat and add the halloumi. Let cook 2-3 minutes each side until golden brown.
6. Toast pita breads in the oven for 5 minutes or warm in microwave.
7. To serve: Place sliced lamb, halloumi slices and chosen salad vegetables into each pita pocket and drizzle with mayo or your fave sauces.





Aromatic Slow Cooked Chicken Noodle Soup

Prepare Time

20 Minutes

Cook Time

1 hour

Serves

4 Servings

Ingredients

- 32 oz. chicken or vegetable stock
- 4 chicken thighs
- 2 tsp chopped fresh ginger
- 4 cloves of garlic crushed
- 1 whole bay leaf
- 1 Pinch of grated Nutmeg
- 1/3 tsp black peppercorns crushed
- ½ stock of celery diced
- 1 large carrot chopped into chunks
- 100g noodles (of your choice)
- 2 spring onions
- 2 tsp soy sauce
- Salt ½ teaspoon
- 2 spring onions diced, green part only
- 2-3 stems of parsley (optional)
- 2-3 stems of chive(optional)
- A dash of apple cider vinegar
- Nutmeg, chives, and parsley for garnish

Chicken soup has been warming hearts and soothing souls for centuries, earning its spot as the ultimate comfort food across cultures. From ancient Greece to your grandma's kitchen, this nourishing bowl of goodness has always been a go-to remedy for the sniffles and a cozy pick-me-up on chilly days. Often dubbed "Jewish penicillin," chicken soup is more than just a dish—it's a tradition steeped in history.

This version brings a bit of extra flair with the addition of bay leaf and a dash of nutmeg. The bay leaf adds a subtle depth of flavor while slowly releasing its goodness into the broth, and nutmeg provides a warm, aromatic finish that makes each spoonful even cozier. Whether it's simmering away in a rustic pot or being slurped up with noodles on a cold night, this chicken soup is a deliciously timeless way to feed both body and soul.

Continued... Aromatic Slow Cooked Chicken Noodle Soup

Instructions

1. Pour the stock into a pot. It's best to use a thick-bottomed pot like a cast iron or heavy stainless steel pot, as this helps with gentle stovetop slow cooking. Add the chicken thighs, diced ginger, whole bay leaf, crushed peppercorns, and crushed garlic. If you prefer not to have visible garlic in the soup, finely dice it instead. Crushing the garlic allows it to slowly release its flavor and gives the soup a rustic feel. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt, but be cautious if your broth is already salty—you can omit the salt at this stage if needed.
2. Bring the mixture to a boil. Once boiling, reduce the heat to a gentle simmer. Cook the chicken on low heat for 40-45 minutes. At this point, carefully remove the chicken thighs and place them on a cutting board.
3. Shred the chicken with two forks or dice it, then return it to the pot. Add the diced carrot and celery. If needed, top up with water so the liquid level is about an inch above the chicken and vegetables. Bring to a boil, then gently simmer for another 15 minutes. You can remove the bay leaf at this stage—it has done its job by infusing the soup with flavor.
4. Add the noodles and cook the soup according to the noodle's cooking time. Add a dash of apple cider vinegar.
5. Taste and adjust the salt if necessary. Garnish with grated nutmeg, chopped parsley, spring onions, chives, and soy sauce. Enjoy!





Spiced Roast Chicken with Nam Jaew Sauce

Prepare Time

30 Minutes

Cook Time

40 Minutes

Serves

4 Servings

Ingredients

- 1 chicken whole
- 2 tsp red chilli powder
- 1 tsp fresh black pepper crushed
- 1 tsp cinnamon powder
- 1 tsp salt to taste
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 2 tbsp lemon juice
- 4 garlic cloves minced
- 1 onion sliced
- Fresh rosemary or thyme for garnish
- 4-5 dried red chillies
- 3 tbsp fish sauce
- 2 tbsp brown sugar
- 3 garlic cloves minced
- 1 shallot finely chopped
- 1 tbsp lime juice
- 1 tsp toasted sesame seeds
- 1 tsp cooking oil

Whole spices are key to transforming dishes into flavorful masterpieces, as exemplified by the Spiced Roasted Chicken with Nam Jaew Sauce. This recipe uses a blend of red chili powder, black pepper, cinnamon powder, and salt, rubbed onto a whole chicken before roasting to infuse the chicken with a rich tapestry of flavors, enhanced by aromatic garlic and onions during the cooking process.

The dish is completed with a vibrant Nam Jaew sauce, a Thai chili dipping sauce that features whole spices. Dried red chillies are transformed into a paste, then combined with garlic, shallots, fish sauce, and brown sugar. The sauce is further brightened with lime juice and toasted sesame seeds, creating a harmonious balance that highlights the versatile and transformative power of whole spices in both the main dish and its accompanying sauce.

Continued... Chicken with Nam Jaew Sauce

Instructions

1. Preheat your oven to 375°F (190°C).
2. Rinse the chicken inside and out with cold water, then pat dry.
3. In a small bowl, mix together the red chili powder, black pepper, cinnamon powder, and salt.
4. Rub the spice mixture all over the chicken to evenly coat.
5. Heat the olive oil in a large skillet or roasting pan over medium heat. Add the minced garlic and sliced onion, and sauté for a few minutes until the onion becomes translucent and the garlic becomes fragrant.
6. Place the chicken in the skillet or roasting pan, breast side up. Squeeze the lemon juice over the chicken and pour any remaining juice into the pan.
7. Transfer the skillet or roasting pan to the preheated oven and roast the chicken for about 1 hour and 15 minutes, or until the internal temperature reaches 165°F (74°C) and the juices run clear. Brush the chicken with the pan juices every 20 minutes or so to keep it moist.
8. Once cooked, remove the chicken from the oven and let it rest for 10-15 minutes before carving.
9. Optional: Garnish the chicken with rosemary or thyme.

Nam Jaew sauce (Thai chili dipping sauce)

1. Soak the dried red chilies in warm water for about 10 minutes until they become soft. Once softened, remove the seeds and roughly chop the chilies.
2. In a mortar and pestle, pound the chopped chilies, minced garlic, and finely chopped shallot until you have a coarse paste.
3. Heat a small skillet over medium heat and add the vegetable oil. Once the oil is hot, add the chili paste mixture and sauté for a few minutes until it becomes fragrant.
4. In a small bowl, combine the fish sauce, and brown sugar. Stir well until the sugar dissolves.
5. Add the mixture to the skillet with the chili paste and stir to combine. Cook the sauce over low heat for about 5 minutes.
6. Remove the skillet from the heat and let the sauce cool down slightly. Then, stir in the lime juice, and toasted sesame seeds.
7. Taste, and add more fish sauce for saltiness, lime juice for acidity, or sugar for sweetness.
8. Pour it over your Spiced Roasted Chicken and enjoy.





Spiced Chocolate Chip Cookies

Prepare Time
30 Minutes

Cook Time
8 Minutes

Serves
15 Cookies

Ingredients

- 120 grams unsalted butter, room temperature
- 100 grams dark brown sugar
- 50 grams granulated sugar
- 1 large egg
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla
- 120 grams all-purpose flour
- Seeds from 3 cloves of cardamom (discard the pod shells after opening and taking the seeds out)
- 1 finger length cinnamon sticks
- 1 clove
- 1/5 teaspoon baking soda
- Pinch of salt
- 90g chocolate chips

These aren't your ordinary cookies—think of them as the ultimate fusion of comfort and flavor. By adding cinnamon, cardamom, and cloves, these cookies get a delightful twist that makes them feel like a warm hug in every bite. The cinnamon adds a familiar sweetness and warmth, while cardamom brings in an exotic, floral note. Cloves offer a subtle hint of spice that ties it all together, making each bite irresistibly rich and aromatic.

Perfect for the holidays, or honestly, any time you crave something a little more special than your average cookie. These cookies have the crisp edges and chewy centers you love, with a burst of flavor that'll surprise your taste buds in the best way possible. Whether you're enjoying them fresh out of the oven or sharing them with friends, these spiced chocolate chip cookies are a guaranteed crowd-pleaser.

Continued... Spiced Chocolate Chip Cookies

Instructions

1. Gently dry roast the spices (Cinnamon, cardamom seeds, cloves) in a pan. Do not overheat. Grind the spices in a mortar and pestle. Add a teaspoon of sugar while grinding and the grinding will be much easier in a mortar and pestle. You may use an electric spice grinder as well if grinding a bigger batch of spices . For small quantities, a mortar and pestle is useful.
2. Mix the flour, salt, baking soda and ground spices together in a bowl and set aside.
3. In the bowl of an electric mixer, cream together the butter and sugars and vanilla until the mixture is light and fluffy. Don't be shy, let it mix for at least 3-5 minutes. Keep Scraping down the sides of the bowl. Add the egg and beat the mix really well.
4. Add all the dry ingredients and gently mix with spatula. Once it is roughly incorporated, add the chocolate chips and mix again with spatula.
5. Use a teaspoon to scoop out dough onto a silicone mat or baking paper lined in a flat pan.
6. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Arrange 6 cookie dough balls on a sheet pan with plenty of room to spread out. (To test how much the cookie dough will spread in the oven, you can bake just one or two cookies on a sheet before doing the rest of the batch.) Bake for 6-8 minutes, until lightly browned around the edges. The centers of the cookies may seem bubbly or not fully set. That's okay! They'll set up when they cool. Let cool for 5 minutes on the sheet pan before transferring to a cooling rack to finish cooling completely.





Fragrant Apple Pie

Prepare Time

30 Minutes

Cook Time

45 Minutes

Serves

8 Servings

Ingredients

- 2 rolls or short crust pastry (around 300g each)
- 1kg Granny Smith Apples (about 6-7 apples, peeled, cored, and thinly sliced)
- 3g of cinnamon (for that warm, spicy kick)
- Seeds from 2 cloves of cardamom (discard the pod shells after opening and taking the seeds out)
- 120g unsalted butter
- 3 Tbsp all-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup water
- 1 cup granulated brown sugar
- 1 egg + 1 Tbsp water (for a golden, glossy finish)

Get ready to embark on a flavorful journey with a twist on the classic apple pie! This isn't just any apple pie; it's a delightful blend of aromatic spices and sweet apple goodness that'll make your taste buds dance. Imagine the warm embrace of cinnamon mingling with the exotic hint of cardamom—spices that turn an ordinary apple pie into an extraordinary treat.

The foundation of this pie is a buttery, flaky crust, wrapped around a luscious filling of tart Granny Smith apples, seasoned to perfection. The rich, golden lattice top not only looks impressive but also adds a delightful crunch to every bite. As the pie bakes, your kitchen will be filled with the irresistible aroma of spiced apples and baked pastry, making it impossible to wait for that first slice.

Continued... Fragrant Apple Pie

Instructions

1. Preheat the oven at 425 °F.
2. Gently dry roast the spices (Cinnamon, cardamom) in a pan. Do not overheat. Grind the spices in a mortar and pestle. Add a teaspoon of brown sugar while grinding and the grinding will be much easier in a mortar and pestle. You may use an electric spice grinder as well if grinding a bigger batch of spices. For small quantities, a mortar and pestle is useful. Peel, core, and slice those apples into thin pieces.
3. In a medium saucepan, melt the butter over medium heat. Whisk in 3 Tbsp of flour and simmer for a minute, whisking like a pro. Add 1/4 cup water and 1 cup brown sugar (remaining), then bring to a boil. Lower the heat and let it simmer for 3 minutes, stirring often. Remove from heat and set aside. Add the ground spices and mix well. Pour your buttery, sugary sauce over the apples and give it a good stir to coat all those slices.
4. Flour your workspace and roll out the bottom pie crust (short crust pastry) into a circle, a few inches more in diameter than your pie plate (eg: roll out to 12" for a 9" pie plate). Gently drape it over the pie plate. Add your apple filling, piling it high in the center—just be careful not to get any filling on the edges. Roll out your second crust into another round. Cut it into 10 strips with a pizza cutter and weave them into a lattice pattern or check pattern (5 strips horizontal and 5 vertical) over the apples. Beat the egg with 1 Tbsp water and brush it over the lattice for a shiny finish.
5. Pop your pie in the oven at 425 °F for 15 minutes. Then, lower the temperature to 350 °F and bake for another 30 minutes, or until the apples are tender and the filling is bubbling through the lattice. Keep an aluminium foil on top of the pie to prevent the crust over baking. Let your pie rest at room temperature for an hour before serving to let all those flavors settle and crust to thicken, Use a teaspoon to scoop out dough onto a silicone mat or baking paper lined in a flat pan.





Warm Spiced Peach Pies

Prepare Time

15 Minutes

Cook Time

25 Minutes

Serves

12 Small Pies

Ingredients

For the pies:

- 400g canned or fresh peaches (about 3 large)
- ½ cup water
- ½ cup sugar
- 4-5 whole cardamom pods
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1 tablespoon whole mace (about ⅔ pieces)
- Small grind whole nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon whole cloves
- 400g frozen puff pastry
- 2 Tablespoons milk (for brushing)

For the glaze:

- ½ cup icing sugar
- Squeeze lemon juice

The filling of these peach pies is made by infusing a sugar syrup with whole cinnamon sticks, cardamom pods, mace, whole cloves and a bit of ground

The filling of these peach pies is made by infusing a sugar syrup with whole cinnamon sticks, cardamom pods, mace, whole cloves and a bit of ground whole nutmeg. With sweet juicy peaches and crispy pastry, they're also finished with a sweet glaze and an extra dusting of nutmeg, a sweet and spiced treat to make for get-togethers, pot-lucks or family occasions.

The spiced syrup is deliciously sticky and when cooked turns these pies into super tasty, fresh desserts. The trickiest part is crimping the edges of the pies so the filling doesn't spill out, but this is done easy enough with the ends of a fork or your fingers. Just make sure there are no gaps!

Continued... Warm Spiced Peach Pies

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350°F
2. In a small saucepan place the water, sugar and spices in a small pot. Bring to a simmer and let cook for about 2 minutes until the syrup is starting to thicken. Crush cardamom pods gently with a spoon.
3. Strain the pot through a fine sieve over a large bowl to remove the spices. Discard these spices and keep the sugar liquid aside.
4. Dice the peaches into small cubes then stir into the sugar/spice liquid. Mix well.
5. Roll out the puff pastry to about 5mm thick. Using the rim of a glass or a round cookie cutter, cut as many circles out as possible.
6. Place half of the circles onto a lined baking tray.
7. Add a spoonful of the peaches to the centre of each circle.
8. Top each pie with a second pastry circle and gently press edges together with a fork.
9. Use a pastry brush to brush each pie generously with the milk.
10. Bake for about 20 minutes until the pastry is puffed and golden. Remove from oven and leave on tray 2 minutes then transfer to a cooling rack.
11. To make the glaze: Mix the icing sugar and a squeeze of lemon juice in a bowl and add enough water to make a thick, pourable liquid.
12. Drizzle a spoonful of the glaze over each pie.

Notes

Store in an airtight container for 3 days, in a single layer. Serve with vanilla ice-cream for an extra special treat.



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