

# Spice Basics



**GOOD  
FOOD**  
STORE

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## Allspice

Allspice has a pleasantly warm, fragrant aroma. The name reflects the pungent taste, which resembles a peppery compound of cloves, cinnamon and nutmeg or mace. Good with eggplant, most fruit, pumpkins and other squashes, sweet potatoes and other root vegetables. Combines well with chili, cloves, coriander, garlic, ginger, mace, mustard, pepper, rosemary and thyme.

## Anise

The aroma and taste of the seeds are sweet, licorice like, warm, and fruity, but Indian anise can have the same fragrant, sweet, licorice notes, with mild peppery undertones. The seeds are more subtly flavored than fennel or star anise. Good with apples, chestnuts, figs, fish and seafood, nuts, pumpkin and root vegetables. Combines well with allspice, cardamom, cinnamon, cloves, cumin, fennel, garlic, nutmeg, pepper and star anise.

## Basil

Sweet basil has a complex sweet, spicy aroma with notes of clove and anise. The flavor is warming, peppery and clove-like with underlying mint and anise tones. Essential to pesto and pistou. Good with corn, cream cheese, eggplant, eggs, lemon, mozzarella, cheese, olives, pasta, peas, pizza, potatoes, rice, tomatoes, white beans and zucchini. Combines well with capers, chives, cilantro, garlic, marjoram, oregano, mint, parsley, rosemary and thyme.

## Bay Leaf

Bay has a sweet, balsamic aroma with notes of nutmeg and camphor and a cooling astringency. Fresh leaves are slightly bitter, but the bitterness fades if you keep them for a day or two. Fully dried leaves have a potent flavor and are best when dried only recently. Good with beef, chestnuts, chicken, citrus fruits, fish, game, lamb, lentils, rice, tomatoes, white beans. Combines well with allspice, garlic, juniper, marjoram, oregano, parsley, sage, savory and thyme.

## Caraway Seed

Caraway has a pungent aroma that, like the flavor, is warm and bittersweet, sharply spicy, with a note of dried orange peel and a slight but lingering hint of anise. Good with apples, breads, cabbage, duck, goose, noodles, onions, pork, potatoes and other root vegetables, sauerkraut and tomatoes.

## Cardamom

The aroma of cardamom is strong but mellow, fruity, and penetrating. The taste is lemony and flowery, with a note of camphor or eucalyptus due to cineol in the essential oil. It is pungent and smoky, with a warm, bittersweet note, yet is also clean and fresh. Good with apples, oranges, pears, legumes, sweet potatoes, and other root vegetables. Combines well with caraway, chili, cinnamon, cloves, coffee, coriander, cumin, ginger, paprika, pepper, saffron and yogurt.

## Cayenne

The most common ground chili, cayenne is made from small, ripe chili peppers grown worldwide. The flavor is tart, slightly smoky and intensely pungent. Essential to: berbere, chili powder, curry powders and pastes, harissa, jerk seasoning, Kim chi, moles, romesco sauce and sambals. Combines well with most spices, bay, coriander, coconut milk, lemon and lime juice.

## Celery Seed

Celery seed has an aroma and taste that is much more pronounced than that of the parent plant. It is penetrating and spicy, with hints of nutmeg, citrus and parsley and it leaves a somewhat bitter, burning aftertaste. Good with cabbage, chicken, cucumber, fish, potatoes, rice, soy sauce, tomatoes and tofu. Combines well with cilantro, cloves, cumin, ginger, mustard, parsley, pepper and turmeric.



## Chervil

Chervil is sweetly aromatic. The taste is subtle and soothing, with light anise notes and hints of parsley, caraway and pepper. Good with asparagus, beets, carrots, cream cheese, eggs, fava beans, fennel, fish and seafood, green beans, lettuce, mushrooms, peas, potatoes, poultry, tomatoes and veal. Combines well with basil, chives, cresses, dill, hyssop, lemon thyme, mint, mustard, parsley, salad burnet and tarragon.

## Chives

All parts of chives have a light, onion aroma and a spicy, onion flavor. Good with avocados, cream cheese, egg dishes, fish and seafood, potatoes, smoked salmon, root vegetables and zucchini. Combines well with basil, chervil, cilantro, fennel, paprika, parsley, sweet cicely and tarragon.

## Cilantro

Leaves, roots, and unripe seeds all have the same aroma. Some people are addicted to its refreshing, lemony ginger aroma with notes of sage; others hate it and find it soapy and disagreeable. The flavor is delicate yet complex, with a suggestion of pepper, mint, and lemon. Good with avocados, coconut milk, corn, cucumber, fish and seafood, legumes, lemons and limes, rice and root vegetables.

## Cinnamon

Cinnamon has a warm agreeably sweet, woody aroma that is delicate yet intense. The taste is fragrant and warm with hints of clove and citrus. The presence of eugenol in the essential oil distinguishes cinnamon from cassia, giving it the note of clove. Good with almonds, apples, apricots, bananas, chocolate, coffee, eggplant, lamb, pears, poultry and rice. Combines well with cardamom, cloves, coriander, cumin, ginger, mace, nutmeg, tamarind and turmeric.

## Cloves

The aroma of cloves is assertive and warm, with notes of pepper and camphor. The taste is fruity but also sharp, hot, and bitter; it leaves a numbing sensation in the mouth. As in allspice, eugenol in the essential oil is mainly responsible for the characteristic taste. Good with apples, beets, red cabbage, carrots, chocolate, ham, onions, oranges, pork, pumpkin and other squashes and sweet potatoes. Combines well with allspice, bay, cardamom, cinnamon, chili, coriander, curry leaves, fennel, ginger, mace, nutmeg and tamarind.

## Coriander

Ripe seeds have a sweet, woody, spicy fragrance with peppery and floral notes; the taste is sweet, mellow and warm with a clear hint of orange peel. Good with apples, chicken, citrus fruit, fish, ham, mushrooms, onions, plums, pork and potatoes. Combines well with allspice, chili, cinnamon, cloves, cumin, fennel, garlic, ginger, mace and nutmeg.

## Cumin

The smell of cumin is strong and heavy, spicy-sweet with acrid but warm depth. The flavor is rich, slightly bitter, sharp, earthy, and warm, with a persistent pungency. Use sparingly. Good with beans, bread, cabbage, hard or pungent cheeses, chicken, eggplant, lamb, lentils, onions, potatoes, rice, sauerkraut and squash. Combines well with allspice, anise seed, bay, cardamom, chili, cinnamon, cloves, coriander, curry leaves, fennel seed, fenugreek, garlic, ginger, mace and nutmeg, mustard seed, oregano, paprika, pepper, thyme and turmeric.

## Dill

Dill leaves have a clean, fragrant aroma of anise and lemon. The taste is of anise and parsley, mild but sustained. The seeds smell like a sweet caraway due to carvone in the essential oil; the taste is of anise with a touch of sharpness and lingering warmth. Leaves Good with beets, carrots, celery root, cucumber, eggs, fava beans, fish and seafood, potatoes, rice, spinach and zucchini. Leaves combine well with: basil, capers, garlic, horseradish, mustard, paprika and parsley. Seeds Good with cabbage, onion, potatoes, pumpkin and vinegar. Seeds combine well with: chili, coriander seed, cumin, garlic, ginger, mustard seed and turmeric.

## Fennel

The whole plant has a warm, anise-licorice aroma. The taste is similar: pleasantly fresh, slightly sweet, with a hint of camphor. Fennel seed is less pungent than dill and more astringent than anise. Good with beans, beets, cabbage, cucumber, duck, fish and seafood, leeks, lentils, pork, potatoes, rice and tomatoes. Combines well with chervil, cinnamon, cumin, fenugreek, lemon balm, mint, parsley, Sichuan pepper and thyme.

## Fenugreek

The aroma of the raw seeds can be identified as the overriding smell of some curry powders. Their taste is celery or lovage-like and bitter; the texture is floury. Good with fish curries, green and root vegetables, lamb, legumes, potatoes, rice and tomatoes. Combines well with cardamom, cinnamon, cloves, coriander, cumin, fennel seed, garlic, dried limes, pepper and turmeric.

## **Garlic**

Raw dried garlic is pungent and hot; green garlic is milder. The disulphate allicin is formed when raw garlic is cut, and this accounts for the smell that raw garlic leaves on the breath. Cooking garlic degrades the allicin, but forms other disulphates that have fewer odors. Good with almost anything savory. Combines well with most herbs and spices.

## **Ginger**

Whole dried ginger is less aromatic than fresh, but once bruised or powdered it is warm and peppery with light, lemony notes. The taste is fiery, pungent, and penetrating. Essential to: berbere, curry and masala blends, five spice powder and pickling spices. Combines well with cardamom, cinnamon, cloves, dried fruits, honey, nutmeg, nuts, preserved lemons, paprika, pepper, rose water and saffron.

## **Juniper Berries**

The aroma of juniper is pleasantly woody, bittersweet and unmistakably like gin. The taste is clean and refreshing, sweet with a slight burning effect, and has a hint of pine and resin. Good with apples, beef, cabbage, duck, game, goose, and pork. Combines well with bay, caraway, celery, garlic, marjoram, pepper, rosemary, savory and thyme.

## **Mace**

Mace has nutmeg's rich, fresh, and warm aroma, but the smells are stronger and show a lively, floral character with notes of pepper and clove. The taste of mace is warm, aromatic, delicate, and subtle with some lemony sweetness, yet it finishes with a potent bitterness. Good with cabbage, carrots, cheese and cheese dishes, chicken, egg dishes, fish and seafood chowders, lamb, milk dishes, onion, pates and terrines, potato, pumpkin pie, spinach, sweet potato and veal. Combines well with cardamom, cinnamon, cloves, coriander, cumin, ginger, nutmeg, paprika, pepper and thyme.

## **Marjoram**

The basic taste is warm, slightly sharp and bitter with a note of camphor. To this marjoram adds a sweet, subtle spiciness, even in temperate climates. Good with anchovies, artichokes, beans, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, cheese dishes, chicken, corn, duck, eggplant, eggs, fish and shellfish, lamb, mushrooms, onions, pork, potatoes, poultry, spinach, squash, sweet peppers, tomatoes, veal and venison. Combines well with basil, bay, chili, cumin, garlic, paprika, parsley, rosemary, sage, sumac and thyme.

## **Mustard**

Whole mustard seed has virtually no aroma. When ground it smells pungent, and cooking releases an acrid, earthy aroma. When chewed, black seeds have a forceful flavor; brown ones are slightly bitter, then hot and aromatic; the larger white seeds have an initial sickly sweetness. Good with roast and grilled beef, cabbage, strong cheeses, chicken, curries, dals, fish and seafood, cold meats, rabbit and sausages. Combines well with bay, chili, coriander, cumin, dill, fennel, fenugreek, garlic, honey, parsley, pepper, tarragon and turmeric.

## **Nutmeg**

Nutmeg and mace have a similar rich, fresh, warm aroma. Nutmeg smells sweet but is more camphorous and pine-like than mace. The taste of both is warm and highly aromatic, but nutmeg has hints of clove and a deeper, bittersweet, woody flavor. Good with cabbage, carrots, cheese and cheese dishes, chicken, eggs, fish and seafood chowders, lamb, milk dishes, onion, potato, pumpkin pie, spinach, sweet potato and veal. Combines well with cardamom, cinnamon, cloves, coriander, cumin, ginger, mace, pepper and thyme.

## **Oregano**

The basic taste is warm, slightly sharp, and bitter with a note of camphor. Oregano is robust and peppery, with a bite and often a lemony note. These qualities diminish in colder climates. Good with anchovies, artichokes, beans, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, cheese dishes, chicken, corn, duck, eggplant, eggs, fish and shellfish, lamb, mushrooms, onions, pork, potatoes, poultry, spinach, squash, sweet peppers, tomatoes, veal and venison. Combines well with basil, bay, chili, cumin, garlic, paprika, parsley, rosemary, sage, sumac and thyme.

## **Paprika**

The aroma of paprika tends to be restrained and delicate; caramel notes, fruitiness or smokiness characterize some paprikas, while others have a nose prickling, light heat. Flavors vary from sweetly smoky to rounded and full-bodied, or gently pungent with bitter notes. Good with beef and veal, white cheeses, chicken, duck, most legumes and vegetables, pork and rice. Combines well with allspice, caraway, cardamom, garlic, ginger, oregano, parsley, pepper, rosemary, saffron, thyme, turmeric, sour cream and yogurt.



## **Parsley**

Parsley has a lightly spicy aroma with hints of anise and lemon; its taste is tangy and herbaceous, and has a light, peppery note. Flat-leaf parsley has a more persistent and finer flavor than curly parsley and a finer texture. Both bring out the flavors of other seasonings. Good with eggs, fish, lemon, lentils, rice, tomatoes and most vegetables. Combines well with basil, bay, capers, chervil, chili, chives, garlic, lemon balm, marjoram, mint, oregano, pepper, rosemary, sorrel, sumac and tarragon.

## **Pepper**

Black pepper has a fine fruity, pungent fragrance with warm, woody and lemony notes. The taste is hot and biting with a clean, penetrating aftertaste. White pepper is less aromatic and can smell musty, but it has a sharp pungency with a sweetish after note. Red or pink peppercorns are fully ripe fruits, usually available preserved in brine or vinegar. They have a soft outer shell with a delicate, almost sweet, fruity taste. The inner core provides a moderate, lingering heat. Green pepper has light aroma, and an agreeable, fresh pungency; it is not overpoweringly hot. Green peppercorns are preserved by freeze-drying or dehydration, or packed in brine or vinegar. Keep fresh green and red pepper berries in the refrigerator. Good with most foods. Combines well with basil, cardamom, cinnamon, cloves, coconut milk, coriander, cumin, garlic, ginger, lemon, lime, nutmeg, parsley, rosemary, thyme, and turmeric.

## **Rosemary**

Rosemary is strongly aromatic, warm and peppery, resinous and slightly bitter, with notes of pine and camphor. Nutmeg and camphor are present in the taste; the aftertaste is woody, balsamic and astringent. The flavor dissipates after leaves are cut. Flowers have a milder flavor than leaves. Good with apricots, cabbage, cream cheese, eggplant, eggs, fish, lamb, lentils, mushrooms, onions, oranges, parsnips, pork, potatoes, poultry, rabbit, tomatoes, veal and winter squashes. Combines well with bay, chives, garlic, lavender, lovage, mint, oregano, parsley, sage, savory and thyme.

## **Sage**

Sage can be mild, musky, and balsamic, or strongly camphorous with astringent notes and a warm spiciness. Generally, variegated species are milder than common sage. Dried sage is more potent than fresh and can be acrid and musty. Good with apples, dried beans, cheese, onions and tomatoes. Combines well with bay, caraway, cutting celery, dried ginger, lovage, marjoram, paprika, parsley, savory and thyme.

## **Savory**

Savories have a peppery bite. Summer savory has a subtle, herbaceous scent and flavor. It is agreeably piquant, slightly resinous, and reminiscent of thyme, mint, and marjoram. Winter savory has a more assertive, penetrating aroma and flavor, with notes of sage and pine. Good with beans, beets, cabbage, cheese, eggs, fish, legumes, potatoes, rabbit, sweet peppers and tomatoes. Combines well with basil, bay, cumin, garlic, lavender, marjoram, mint, oregano, parsley, rosemary and thyme.

## **Tarragon**

The leaves are sweetly aromatic, with hints of pine, anise, or licorice; the flavor is strong yet subtle, with spicy anise and basil notes and a sweet aftertaste. Long cooking diminishes the aroma but the flavor is not lost. Good with artichokes, asparagus, eggs, fish and seafood, potatoes, poultry, tomatoes and zucchini. Combines well with basil, bay, capers, chervil, chives, dill, parsley and salad herbs.

## **Thyme**

The whole plant has a warm, earthy, and peppery fragrance when lightly bushed. The taste is spicy, with notes of cloves and mint, a hint of camphor, and a mouth-cleansing aftertaste. Good with cabbage, carrots, corn, eggplant, lamb, leeks, legumes, onions, potatoes, rabbit, tomatoes, and wild mushrooms. Combines well with allspice, basil, bay, chili, clove, garlic, lavender, marjoram, nutmeg, oregano, paprika, parsley, rosemary and savory.

## **Turmeric**

Fresh turmeric is crunchy, has gingery, citrus aromas and an agreeably earthy flavor with citrus overtones. Dried turmeric has a complex, rich, woody aroma with floral, citrus and ginger notes. The taste is slightly bitter and sour, moderately pungent, warm and musky. Good with beans, eggplant, eggs, fish, lentils, meat, poultry, rice, root vegetables and spinach. Combines well with chili, cilantro, cloves, coconut milk, coriander, cumin, curry leaf, fennel, galangal, garlic, ginger, kaffir lime leaves, lemon grass, mustard seeds, paprika and pepper.

## **Wasabi**

Wasabi has a fierce, burning smell that makes the nose prickle and a biting sharp, but fresh and cleansing taste. Dried wasabi only develops its penetrating aroma and flavor when mixed with water and left to steep for about 10 minutes. Good with avocado, beef, raw fish, rice, and seafood. Combines well with ginger and soy sauce.