

SCIENCE OF SPICES

CINNAMON



Sweet | Aromatic | Warm

Cinnamon is a small evergreen tree in the laurel family, found in the wild growing in wet tropical forests.

GENERAL FACTS

Botanical Name

Cinnamomum Verum

Major Flavor Compound

Cinnamaldehyde

Parts Used

Dried bark of tender shoots.

Region Of Cultivation

Cinnamon is native to the island of Sri Lanka, and now also cultivated in Myanmar, Vietnam, Indonesia and the islands of the Seychelles.

Method Of Cultivation

Trees are coppiced at 18-24 months of age and the stump covered, causing it to grow like a bush. New shoots are removed at the base and stripped for their bark every two years.

Preparation

Inner layers of bark are dried in the sun and rolled together by hand into long “quills”, which are graded and cut.

Non-culinary Uses

In perfumery and as a natural antiseptic.

Powder

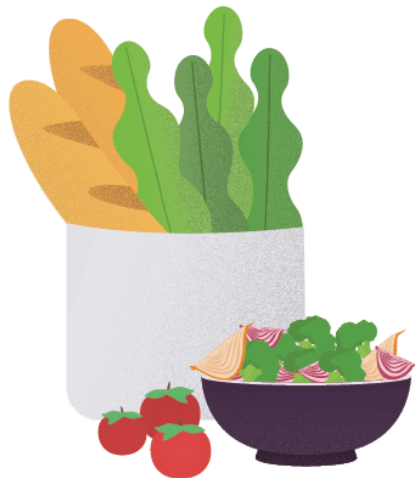
Ground spice quickly loses its flavour. Buy it small quantities, keep in an airtight container in a cool, dark place, and use within 6 months.

Sticks

Cinnamon sticks will keep their flavour for up to a year. Lighter brown, thinner, more fragile sticks are higher quality.

KITCHEN CREATIVITY

Cinnamon does not itself taste sweet, but enhances the perception of sweetness in other ingredients, making it perfect for sweet bakes and desserts, as well as drawing out sweet notes in savoury dishes.



RELEASING THE FLAVOUR

The taste components in cinnamon need time to escape from its woody matrix, and the critical flavour compound, cinnamaldehyde, does not dissolve in water.

- **Add early in cooking** to give flavours time to suffuse the dish.
- **Fat and alcohol** will help disperse cinnamaldehyde.
- **Steam** is also a carrier of cinnamaldehyde, so boil vigorously with lid on pan.



FOOD PARTNERS

- **Fruit.** Mix cinnamon powder with sugar and scatter over peaches, figs, apples and pears before baking or grilling, or add to the batter for a plum or cherry clafoutis.
- **Sweet bakes.** Use ground cinnamon to flavour Nordic buns, Italian panforte, or French pain d'eices.
- **Tomatoes and aubergines.** A cinnamon-infused tomato sauce makes an excellent topping for baked aubergines.
- **Red meats.** Add a stick or two of cinnamon to lamb tagine, and Iranian khorak beef stew, or the stock of a fragrant Vietnamese beef pho needle soup.
- **Pigeon.** Cinnamon in the main flavouring in Moroccan pastilla pigeon pie with filo pastry.



BLEND TO TRY

Mulling Spice

Warm red wine or cider is infused with this collection of spices and drunk at winter celebrations.

- **2 cinnamon sticks**
- **6 cloves**
- **6 allspice berries**
- **½ nutmeg**
- **2 bay leaves**

Instructions:

Add all spices to a pan of red wine or cider and heat to simmer point. Add sugar or honey, orange and/or lemon slices, and rum or sloe gin to taste. This blend is enough for 2 bottles of red wine or 1.75 litres (3 pints) of cider.

Jamaican Jerk Rub

A dry seasoning used to marinate chicken, fish and beef. Invented in Jamaica and adapted around the Caribbean.

- **2 tsp allspice**
- **1 tsp whole black pepper**
- **½ tsp cloves**
- **1 tsp chipotle or cayenne powder**
- **1 tsp paprika**
- **1 tsp grated nutmeg**
- **1 tsp ground ginger**
- **½ tsp ground cinnamon**
- **2 tsp onion powder**
- **2 tsp garlic powder**
- **1 tsp dried thyme**
- **2 tsp brown sugar**
- **2 tsp sea salt**

Instructions:

Grind the whole spices and combine with the rest of the ingredients. Flavour intensity will depend on marinating time.



BLENDS TO TRY

Burmese Garam Masala

India's most famous spice mix is also popular in Myanmar. Use as the basis for spicing a dish, or like a seasoning at the end of cooking.

- ***1 tsp coriander seeds***
- ***1 tsp black peppercorns***
- ***1 tsp cumin seeds***
- ***2 dried bay leaves***
- ***1 tsp cardamom pods***
- ***1 tsp cloves***
- ***1-inch (2.5cm) cinnamon stick***
- ***2 star anise***

Instructions:

Dry-roast all the spices in a frying pan, over low heat, until fragrant. Leave to cool before grinding into fine powder.



Source: Dr Stuart Farrimond 'The Science of Spices'.