



Spice Series

CINNAMON

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*“He who controls the spice controls the universe.”
— Frank Herbert, Dune*



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Letter from the author

Growing up in India, I remember the smells of aromatic spices in the air. The smell of spices meant that my mother was cooking, and she was cooking often.

Back then, I did not understand the importance of spices in health and nutrition. I didn't understand why Columbus was looking for spices, or that we consumed food so differently from a lot of the world. Spices were taken for granted.

I was raised a vegetarian in India. My entire family is vegetarian, so that was just the way we ate. My mother bought vegetables from the vegetable stand down the street every day. There was no menu planning - we ate what was available and fresh. We bought wheat from the store and brought it to the local grinder to get it ground - right in front of us. Our flour had no preservatives or dough conditioners in it.

However, when I decided to get a degree in Hotel Management, I started eating just about everything. At that point in my life, I couldn't tell the difference between pork and lamb meat. I had to learn everything - but even so, when we cooked meat in India, it remained only in the dishes with meat. There was never any lard in beans, bacon in salads, and gelatin was not an animal product.

After I moved to the United States in my early twenties, I was exposed to more and more animal products and processed foods in my everyday life. I remember being appalled by dehydrated scalloped potatoes in the grocery store once. How hard is it to slice a potato? But things started going downhill overtime. I still tried to make things from scratch, but it was easy to buy boxes to make cakes and cookies, and buy and canned and frozen everything.

After being diagnosed with arthritis, I stepped back, and examined the one difference between my lifestyle and of all of my family - none of whom had any arthritis. It was animal products. Thus began my return, first to vegetarianism, then to veganism. Since then, I've spent my life learning about foods, nutrition, and how it can nourish or poison us. This book is one in a series of books that illustrate the use of spices in foods.

Happy Cooking!

Barkha Herman



Barkha, Laal and Kit

Types of Cinnamon

Two major varieties of Cinnamon exist: the Ceylon cinnamon and the Cassia cinnamon. They look different from each other and have different nutritional properties. Other species exist but are not as popular.



In the image above, you can see the difference between Cassia and Ceylon Cinnamon. Ceylon is lighter in color, less red, and appears more fibrous. Ceylon and Cassia have slightly different health properties due to their composition.

Cassia cinnamon comes from the *Cinnamomum cassia* tree, also called *Cinnamomum aromaticum*. It originated in Southern China and is also known as Chinese cinnamon. However, there are several subspecies now widely grown across Eastern and Southern Asia. Cassia tends to be a dark brown-red color with thicker sticks and a rougher texture than Ceylon cinnamon. Cassia cinnamon is considered lower quality. It is very cheap and is the type most commonly consumed around the world.

Ceylon cinnamon: Also known as "true" cinnamon. Cassia contains significant amounts of a compound called coumarin, which is harmful in large doses.



Ceylon, or "true cinnamon," is native to Sri Lanka and southern India. It's made from the inner bark of the *Cinnamomum verum* tree. Ceylon is a lighter brown in color and forms tighter curls when processed. Ceylon cinnamon is less common and has long been prized as a cooking spice. It is quite expensive compared to the more common Cassia variety. It has a delicate and mildly sweet flavor suitable for desserts. Approximately 50–63% of its essential oil is cinnamaldehyde, which is quite low compared to Cassia. This explains its milder aroma and flavor.

Benefits of Cinnamon



Cinnamon contains *cinnamaldehyde*. cinnamaldehyde is proven to have medicinal value that impact the metabolism, increasing it.



Cinnamon is loaded with powerful antioxidants, specifically as polyphenols. n a study that compared the antioxidant activity of 26 spices, cinnamon wound up as the clear winner, even outranking "superfoods" such as garlic.



Cinnamon is anti-inflammatory. Studies show that Cinnamon has potent anti-inflammatory properties.

Benefits of Cinnamon



In people with type 2 diabetes, 1 gram or about half a teaspoon of cinnamon per day has been shown to have beneficial effects on blood markers, including reduced LDL.



Cinnamon can dramatically reduce insulin resistance, helping this important hormone do its job.



Cinnamon has been shown to decrease the amount of glucose that enters your bloodstream after a meal. Also, a compound in cinnamon can act on cells by mimicking insulin.

Benefits of Cinnamon



Two compounds found in cinnamon appear to inhibit the buildup of a protein called tau in the brain, which is one of the hallmarks of Alzheimer's disease.



In test-tube and animal studies, it has been shown that cinnamon extracts may protect against cancer.



Cinnamaldehyde, one of the main active components of cinnamon, may help fight various kinds of infection, including bacterial and fungal infections.

Benefits of Cinnamon



A laboratory study looking at HIV-infected cells found that Cassia cinnamon was the most effective treatment of all 69 medicinal plants studied.

As you can see, cinnamon is overall a beneficial plant. However there are some side effects of over consumption. Coumarin is a compound found naturally in several plant species. It can be harmful in large doses.

Cinnamon in Ayurveda



Cinnamon is used in ayurvedic herbal preparations to enhance the bioavailability of other herbs. In other words, it acts like a catalyst to other spices. It is a warming spice, and contributes the sweet, pungent and bitter tastes.

Kapha: Acts as a pacifying agent.

Vata: Acts as a balancing agent.

Pitta: Should consume smaller doses of cinnamon.

In Ayurveda, cinnamon is used to balance the digestion and to pacify stomach disorders. Combined with other warming herbs and spices like ginger and black pepper, it can be boiled into an herbal tea to soothe discomfort associated with colds. Its oil is used to pacify headaches and keep joints healthy.

Cinnamon is also used in several dessert dishes.

Disclaimer

The sole purpose of these articles is to provide information about the tradition of ayurveda. This information is not intended for use in the diagnosis, treatment, cure or prevention of any disease. If you have any serious acute or chronic health concern, please consult a trained health professional who can fully assess your needs and address them effectively. If you are seeking the medical advice of a trained ayurvedic expert, call or e-mail us for the number of a physician in your area. Check with your doctor before taking herbs or using essential oils when pregnant or nursing.

Cinnamon Chai

Chai is the Indian term for tea, and is served with spices and milk in India. This version of Chai contains almond milk, Cinnamon, Ginger and black pepper.



Ingredients

- Black Tea to taste
- ½ cup Almond Milk
- ½ cup Water
- ¼ teaspoon Cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon Ginger
- ¼ teaspoon Black Pepper

Preparation

In a pot, combine all ingredients and bring to a roaring boil. Add sweetener if desired. Serve hot.

NOTE: I like to boil the milk separately, and froth it before adding to the water and tea & spice mixture.

Cinnamon Twist

Chai is the Indian term for tea, and is served with spices and milk in India. This version of Chia contains almond milk, Cinnamon, Ginger and black pepper.



Ingredients

- Pizza Dough
- 2 tablespoon melted vegan butter
- 2 teaspoon Cinnamon
- 2 teaspoon sugar

Preparation

Cut the dough into thin strips, lay on a baking sheet and twist. Spread the cinnamon, sugar and butter mix. Bake at 35 for 20 minutes or till brown.

NOTE: You can use store bought dough or make your own at home, by combining flour, water and some oil.

How to cook Spices

Spices have limited shelf lives. Unless you use them frequently, you should buy them in smaller quantities, and replace frequently.



If you need to buy spices in bulk, buy whole spices and grind them as you use them. This will preserve the potency of spices. Most spices contain oils that can go bad. Spices should be stored in cool places, and sometime even refrigerated to make them last longer. The best way to get the flavors in the spices going is to either dry roast them in a pan for just a minute or so – when you smell the spices they are ready!

Spices have a limited shelf life. Buy in small quantities and replace frequently. The best way to ensure freshness is to buy whole spices and grind before use.



Another alternative to spices is to sauté them for a minute or two in fat. This will also bring out the aromas in spices. In stews and gravies that cook for longer periods, you can just add spices directly without roasting or cooking in oil.

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