

November

Spice Society

Clatskanie Library District



The cinnamon trade was dominated by Arab traders from 8 CE. Sources for the spice were jealously guarded as evidenced by a tale told by the ancient historian Herodotus. He wrote that giant cinnamon birds gathered the bark from unknown lands to make their nests, and the spice could only be harvested by luring the birds away from their nests with fresh meat!

Cinnamon

Flavor Profile:
warm, woody, sweet, aromatic

Cinnamon is derived from the tender inner bark of evergreen trees belonging to the genus *Cinnamomum* native to Sri Lanka, the Malabar coast of India, and Myanmar. The dried bark forms quills which can be used whole, ground, or pressed for oil.



A Brief History

In the past, cinnamon was more precious than gold! It was used as early as 1600 BCE by the Egyptians in embalming and religious practices. In Medieval Europe it was highly prized for its aromatic and culinary qualities and featured in religious rites and rituals.

It wasn't until early 16 CE that Portuguese sailors discovered cinnamon trees in Sri Lanka and established a presence on the island. Later, the trade would be claimed by the Dutch and contested by the British. Today, cinnamon is grown in South America, the West Indies, and other tropical climates.

Varieties of Cinnamon

There are hundreds of types of cinnamon that are used locally across the globe, but the cinnamon traded internationally can be divided into two categories: Ceylon and Cassia.

Ceylon (*Cinnamomum verum*) cinnamon has a complex and fragrant flavor, with a citrus overtone and rich buff color. Its hint of citrusy flavor and lack of any bite whatsoever makes it the favorite in both England and Mexico.

China Tung Hing (*Cinnamomum cassia*) is extra sweet, spicy and strong, perfect for cinnamon sugar--mix 2-3 tsp. in 1/2 cup granulated sugar and keep it on the table.

Saigon or Vietnamese (*Cinnamomum loureirii*) is the strongest, richest, and sweetest cinnamon around. It is so strong that in most recipes it should be cut back by about a third, but it is perfect used full strength in any recipe where cinnamon is the dominant flavor.

Indonesian Korintje (*Cinnamomum burmannii*) is fragrant, sweet and mellow. It's as strong as China cinnamon, but smoother and not as nippy.

Special Properties of Cinnamon

Cinnamaldehyde is the chemical compound responsible for cinnamon's flavor and aroma. It also acts as a powerful anti-fungal agent! This quality accounts for its historic use as a preservative. Bakers should beware, however, because too much cinnamon can inhibit the activity of yeast leading to a sluggish rise in breads and pastries.

Cinnamaldehyde can also act as an effective insecticide, especially against the larvae of mosquitoes. It has even been known to repel hungry herbivores from plants sprinkled with the spice.

Research is currently being done on the potential medical applications of cinnamon for problems as diverse as Alzheimer's, obesity and other metabolic health concerns, and as a defense against harmful bacteria. It is even being studied for its potential use against the SARS-COV-2 virus that causes COVID-19!



Korintje Indonesia: Harvest Pumpkin Scones

- 2 3/4 C All-Purpose Flour
- 1/3 C Granulated sugar
- 1 Tbs Baking Powder
- 3/4 Tsp Salt
- 3/4 Tsp Cinnamon, 1/4 Tsp Ginger, 1/4 Tsp All-Spice, 1/4 Tsp Nutmeg
- 8 Tbs Butter
- 1 to 2 C Crystallized Ginger or Cinnamon Chips (optional)
- 2/3 C Pumpkin Purée
- 2 large Eggs
- Coarse Sugar for sprinkling (optional)

1. In a large bowl, whisk together flour, sugar, baking powder, salt and spices.
2. Work in the butter until the mixture is unevenly crumbly.
3. Stir in the ginger and/or chips, if using them.
4. In a separate bowl, whisk the pumpkin purée and the eggs until smooth.
5. Mix the dry and wet ingredients until just combined.
6. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or grease it. Divide the dough in half, and form two circles on the baking sheet, about 3/4 inch thick.
7. Cut each circle into 6 wedges, and pull the wedges apart slightly.
8. If you like, chill the scones while heating the oven to 425°F.
9. Bake the scones for 22-25 minutes, or until golden brown and a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean.

<https://www.kingarthurbaking.com/recipes/harvest-pumpkin-scones-recipe>



Vietnamese or Saigon: Maple Cinnamon Popcorn

- 1 Package Microwave Popcorn
- 1/3 C Maple Syrup
- 1 Tbs Butter
- 1 Tbs Brown Sugar
- 1/2 Tsp Cinnamon
- 1/2 Tsp Vanilla Extract
- 1/2 Tsp Sea Salt

1. Make the popcorn following the package instructions. Transfer popcorn into a large bowl.
2. Preheat the oven to 250°F.
3. Melt the butter in a small saucepan over medium heat. Add the maple syrup and bring to a boil. Add the brown sugar and let simmer for 3-4 minutes.
4. Remove the butter mixture from heat and stir in cinnamon and vanilla.
5. Pour the butter mixture over the popcorn and mix well until coated. Sprinkle salt over the popcorn.
6. Spread the coated popcorn over a lined or greased baking sheet and bake for about 30 minutes. This step keeps the kernels crunchy and creates a glaze over the popcorn.

<https://www.etfoodvoyage.com/maple-cinnamon-popcorn-recipe/>



Ceylon: Champurrado

(Mexican Hot Chocolate)

- 3 1/2 C Water or 2 3/4 C Water with 3/4 Milk
- 1/4 C Dark Brown Sugar
- 1 Tsp Ground Cinnamon
- 1.5 oz Bittersweet Chocolate, Chopped
- 6 Tbs Masa Harina (dried corn dough, available at your local market)

1. Put the water (or milk and water) in a medium saucepan with the sugar and cinnamon.
2. Bring to a boil over high heat, stirring to dissolve the sugar.
3. Reduce heat to medium and add the chopped chocolate, stirring to melt the chocolate.
4. Reduce the heat to low and whisk in the masa harina a little at a time. Continue whisking until silky and thickened, 12-15 minutes.
5. Remove from heat and serve as is or with a dollop of whipped cream.

<https://www.kingarthurbaking.com/recipes/champurrado-recipe>