

AtoZ World Food by World Trade Press

Spices: Allspice



Description

Allspice comes from the pepper plant *Pimenta dioica* and is a member of the *Myrtaceae* family that grows into shrubs or trees and produces aromatic berries. The berries are harvested unripe and sun-dried to be used as a spice that is usually sold whole, but is sometimes ground.

Origin

Allspice was once endemic to Jamaica, but migratory birds spread the plant throughout the Caribbean, Mexico, and Central America. Allspice is commercially cultivated in tropical regions worldwide and is a tolerant plant that can be adapted to container culture.

Varieties

There is only one principal allspice cultivar.

Flavor Profile

Allspice is so-named because it tastes like a peppery combination of cinnamon, cloves, juniper, and nutmeg. It received this name in 17th century England.

Nutrient Profile

Allspice is rich in vitamin C and the minerals calcium, iron, manganese, copper, and magnesium. It has trace amounts of niacin, pantothenic acid, pyridoxine, vitamin A, potassium, and phosphorus. Allspice contains a number of essential oils, including aromatic eugenol.

Preparations

Allspice is essential to many Jamaican dishes, including jerk chicken, curry, and soup. It is widely used in many Middle Eastern stews and as a meat seasoning. Allspice is used as a pickling spice and it commonly seasons sausages, mole, and roasted squash or carrots. Allspice gives Cincinnati-style chili its distinctive flavor, and it can be used to enhance tomato and barbecue sauces. Allspice is equally versatile in sweet food, adding depth to gingerbread and spice cake. It often provides the distinctive flavor of spiced cider, mulled wine, and chai tea.

Season

Allspice is harvested in the fall, just before the seeds ripen, and dried in the field. Dried allspice is available year-round.

Did You Know?

Attempts to cultivate allspice from seed failed until it was discovered that the seeds only germinate after being digested by birds.

In the Caribbean, allspice was used to preserve wild pig suitable for long sea voyages; the cured pork was called *boucan* by the indigenous people and became associated with pirates in the 17th century, generating the term “buccaneers.”

-Christine Kiellerich for World Trade Press

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Fasoolya

Fasoolya consists of green beans cooked slowly with tomatoes, onions, and spices. Spices may include garlic, cilantro, allspice, and/or the Syrian spice mix known as bharat. Fasoolya may be served as a stew, poured over lamb as a sauce, or served as a side dish with rice. Some recipes add ground beef or lamb to create a main course. Recipe Serving: Serves 8

Prep Time: 25
minutes
+ 8 hours resting

Cook Time: 1 hour
30 minutes

Total Time: 9 hours 55
minutes

Vegetarian

Vegan

Gluten Free

Dairy Free

Kosher

Halal

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 cups (360 ml) navy beans, soaked overnight or green beans
- 8 cups (2 l) water
- 3 Tbsp (45 ml) olive oil
- 2 medium onions, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1/2 cup (120 ml) cilantro, finely chopped
- 1 medium carrot, finely chopped
- 1 large potato, cut into 1/2 inch (1 cm) cubes
- 3 large tomatoes, chopped
- 1/2 cup (120 ml) green onions, finely chopped
- salt and pepper, to taste
- 1/4 tsp (1 ml) allspice

Directions

Place the navy beans and their soaking water in a large pot and cover; then cook over a medium heat for about 1 hour or until the beans are cooked but not too soft. In a frying pan, saute the onions, garlic, and coriander in the oil, stirring constantly until they begin to brown. If using green beans instead of navy beans, add them to the pan with 1/2 cup water. Add the contents of the frying pan and the remaining ingredients to the beans. Simmer until the vegetables are tender.

Kousa Mahshi (Meat-Stuffed Zucchini)

Jordanian kousa is a similar, yet slightly smaller and more bulbous version of Western zucchini. In this delicious entrée, the vegetable is hollowed out, stuffed with a spicy meat filling, and simmered in spices. However, as kousa may be difficult to find outside of the Middle East, other types of zucchini may be substituted. Recipe Servings: Serves 8

Prep Time: 25 minutes

Cook Time: 1 hour 15 minutes

Total Time: 1 hour 40 minutes

Vegetarian

Vegan

Gluten Free

Dairy Free

Kosher

Halal

Ingredients

- 8 zucchini
- 1 1/2 cup (285 g) rice
- 2 Tbsp (30 ml) olive oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 cups (400 g) diced tomatoes
- 3 oz (85 g) tomato paste
- 1 tsp (5 ml) ground allspice
- 2 tsp (10 ml) salt
- 3/4 tsp (7.5 ml) pepper
- 2 beef bouillon cubes
- 2 bay leaves
- 1/4 cup (5 g) fresh parsley, chopped
- 1 lb (453 g) ground beef or lamb
- 3 Tbsp (45 ml) butter, melted

Directions

Clean zucchini and trim ends. Cut each zucchini into 3 pieces. Hollow out each piece. In a stock pot, heat olive oil and sauté onion until softened. Add garlic and sauté for 1 more minute. Remove 3/4 of the mixture and set aside. Add tomatoes, tomato paste, salt, pepper, bouillon cubes, bay leaves, parsley. Add water until the pot is 2/3 full. Bring to a simmer. Combine reserved onion mixture with meat, rice, melted butter, and allspice. Tightly stuff each zucchini shell with meat mixture. Add stuffed zucchini to the broth. Cook, covered, for 60–75 minutes. Serve hot.