

AtoZ World Food by World Trade Press

Spices: Nutmeg

Description

Nutmeg is the seed of several species of tropical evergreen tree in the *Myristica* genus. Whole nutmeg seeds are large, round, hard, and reddish brown. The nutmeg tree also produces the spice called mace, made from the red, stringy outer covering of the nutmeg seed..



Origin

Nutmeg trees are native to the Banda Islands, or Spice Islands, of Indonesia.

Varieties

The most common species of nutmeg is *M. fragrans*. Other species grown for their seeds include *M. argentea* from New Guinea and *M. malabarica* from the Kerala region of India.

Flavor Profile

Nutmeg is aromatic and spicy with a warm, pungent bite. Mace carries similar notes, but in a lighter, more floral way, with hints of citrus and cinnamon.

Nutrient Profile

Nutmeg contains manganese, copper, magnesium, iron, calcium, potassium, phosphorus, zinc, fiber, and the B vitamins thiamine, folate, pyridoxine, and niacin. Nutmeg also contains phytonutrients, including antioxidants and volatile oils.

Preparations

Nutmeg and mace can both be purchased ground or whole. Whole nutmeg must be grated before use, while blades of mace may be crushed with a spice grinder or mortar and pestle. In the United States, nutmeg is commonly used to spice cookies, cakes, puddings, and custards, and is ubiquitous in pumpkin pie spice. In European cuisine, nutmeg is added to vegetable gratins, soups, sauces, pudding, and eggnog. In Scotland, mace and nutmeg are both used to season haggis. In India, nutmeg is used in sweet and savory dishes, and is sometimes added to the spice mixture garam masala. Mace is often used as a lighter substitute for nutmeg and is particularly well suited for more delicately flavored fruit dishes. In India and Indonesia, the fruit surrounding the nutmeg seed also is consumed in juice, chutneys, pickles, and sweets.

Season

Nutmeg and mace are available year-round.

Did You Know?

In the 1600s, the Spice Wars were fought between the Dutch and the British over control of the Banda islands and their nutmeg plantations. The British eventually ceded the island of Rhun to the Dutch in exchange for the island of Manhattan.

-Gretchen Hopkins for World Trade Press

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Cornmeal Pudding

Cornmeal pudding made with brown sugar and coconut milk is an everyday favorite sweet in USVI.
Recipe Servings: Serves 8

Prep Time: 5
minutes

Cook Time: 35
minutes

Total Time: 40
minutes

Vegetarian

Ingredients

- 4 cups (1 l) cornmeal
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (180 ml) all-purpose flour
- 2 cups (480 ml) brown sugar
- 1 tsp (5 ml) cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp (2 ml) nutmeg
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp (2 ml) salt
- 4 cups (1 l) coconut milk
- 1 tsp (5 ml) vanilla
- 1 cup (240 ml) raisins
- 1 Tbsp (15 ml) butter

Directions

1. Combine all the dry ingredients in a large bowl.
2. Add the coconut milk and vanilla, stirring just until combined.
3. Stir in the raisins.
4. Butter a 2½-quart (2.5 l) baking dish.
5. Transfer pudding mixture to dish and spread it evenly.
6. Bake at 350°F (175°C) for 30 minutes, or until set but still soft.
7. Serve warm.

Moussaka (Layered Eggplant)

Moussaka is popular fare in countries across the Mediterranean region, including Greece, Turkey, Egypt, and the Balkan countries. The Greek variant was likely devised by famous Greek chef Nikolaos Tselementes in the 1920s and has three layers that are separately cooked before being combined for one final baking. In Greece, moussaka is frequently made with a béchamel sauce, though a simple red sauce, as outlined in the recipe below, is less labor-intensive to prepare. Variations include the addition of other vegetables such as zucchini, carrots, and potatoes. Recipe Serving: Serves 4–6

Prep Time: 20 minutes **Cook Time:** 1 hour 40 minutes **Total Time:** 2 hours 30 minutes
+ 30 minutes resting

Ingredients

- 1 large eggplant
- 1 lb (453 g) ground beef or lamb
- Vegetable oil
- 2 medium onions, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp (5 ml) salt
- ½ tsp (2.5 ml) thyme
- ½ tsp (2.5 ml) oregano
- ½ tsp (2.5 ml) nutmeg
- 2 Tbsp (30 ml) chopped parsley
- 1¼ cups (280 g) canned tomatoes
- ½ cup (120 ml) white wine
- 2 egg whites
- ½ cup (45 g) bread crumbs
- 2 Tbsp (30 ml) grated Parmesan

Directions

1. Pare eggplant and cut into slices. Sprinkle with salt and set aside for 30 minutes. After 30 minutes, rinse and dry eggplant slices thoroughly.
2. Meanwhile, brown meat in vegetable oil with onions and garlic. Drain off fat.
3. Add salt, seasonings, parsley, tomatoes, and wine. Cover and cook slowly for 30 minutes. Then set aside to cool. Brown eggplant slices in vegetable oil.
4. Mix unbeaten egg whites and half the crumbs into meat sauce.
5. Sprinkle bottom of a baking dish with remaining crumbs and cover with eggplant. Spoon meat sauce mixture over eggplant.
6. Top with cheese and bake at 350°F (175°C) for 45 minutes.