

HOLIDAY FLAVORS



Spicing Up the Season

Exploring Traditional Holiday Spices and Their Uses

The holiday season has a distinctive aromatic signature, an amalgamation of scents that instantly spark nostalgia and warmth. Key to these comforting aromas are traditional holiday spices.

CINNAMON: THE SWEET AND SPICY STAPLE

Cinnamon, a versatile spice, is a holiday favorite. It's harvested from the bark of cinnamon trees and is revered for its sweet yet slightly spicy flavor. It's a quintessential ingredient in holiday treats like cinnamon rolls, spiced cookies, and apple pie. Additionally, cinnamon sticks make aromatic additions to hot beverages, adding a festive touch to holiday drink stations.

NUTMEG: THE FRAGRANT POWERHOUSE

Nutmeg, derived from the seed of the *Myristica fragrans* tree, is another powerful holiday spice. Its warm, nutty, and slightly sweet flavor makes it a staple in dishes like eggnog, gingerbread cookies, and various pies. Its fragrance, particularly when freshly grated, can infuse homes with a delightful holiday aroma.

CLOVES: THE TINY TITANS

Cloves, despite their small size, pack a powerful punch. This spice, the dried bud of the



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Syzygium aromaticum tree, lends a warm and slightly bitter flavor to holiday recipes. It's often used in holiday hams, mulled wine, and pumpkin pie. Cloves also play a starring role in crafting holiday pomanders - oranges studded with cloves, offering both decoration and a natural air freshener.

STAR ANISE: THE STAR OF SPICES

Star anise, with its beautiful star shape and potent flavor, is a popular holiday spice. This spice, harvested from the *Illicium verum* tree, offers a warm, slightly sweet taste with

a hint of licorice. It's a key ingredient in mulled wines and spiced ciders and adds a festive flair to holiday decorations when used in wreaths and centerpieces.

ALLSPICE: THE ALL-IN-ONE

Allspice, despite its name, is not a mix of spices but comes from the dried berries of the *Pimenta dioica* tree. It gets its name from its complex flavor profile, reminiscent of cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves. Allspice is a favored addition to holiday cakes, cookies, and savory dishes, offering a warm, slightly peppery note.

CARDAMOM: THE EXOTIC ADDITION

Cardamom, known for its unique spicy-sweet flavor and aromatic seeds, is a cherished addition to holiday recipes.

Originating from the *Elettaria cardamomum* plant, it's often used in Scandinavian holiday breads, cookies, and mulled drinks, adding an exotic and intriguing note.

HOLIDAY SPICES AND HEALTH

Beyond their flavors, these holiday spices also offer various health benefits.

Cinnamon is known for its

potential blood sugar regulating properties, nutmeg for its digestive benefits, cloves for their antimicrobial qualities, star anise for its antioxidant content, allspice for its potential anti-inflammatory effects, and cardamom for its possible heart health benefits for some people.

As the holiday season approaches, the kitchen becomes a stage for these traditional spices to shine.

They lend their unique flavors and fragrances to holiday dishes, contributing to the magic and nostalgia that make this season truly special each year.

Dairy-Free Delights

Making Traditional Holiday Recipes Accessible

The holiday season is a time of indulgence, filled with rich and comforting foods. But what if you, or a loved one, follow a dairy-free diet? Thankfully, there are numerous ways to adapt traditional holiday recipes to be just as delicious without the dairy.

A QUICK GUIDE TO DAIRY SUBSTITUTES

In baking, plant-based milks, such as almond, soy, or oat milk, can directly replace cow's milk. Coconut milk is excellent for creating creamy sauces or soups, and dairy-free yogurts can be used in place of regular yogurt.

In place of butter, margarine or oils can often be used, but remember to adjust for salt if the original recipe called for salted butter. Dairy-free cheese substitutes are widely available, and nutritional yeast can add a cheesy flavor to dishes.



REIMAGINING CLASSIC HOLIDAY DISHES

Let's look at how some traditional holiday dishes can be made dairy-free.

Green Bean Casserole: A classic at many holiday tables, green bean casserole is traditionally made with cream of mushroom soup, which contains dairy. To make it dairy-free, make a homemade mushroom sauce using unsweetened almond milk and flour to thicken.

Mashed Potatoes: Creamy mashed potatoes are a holiday must-have. For a dairy-free version, use a high-starch potato like a Russet and mash with chicken or vegetable broth and olive oil for a creamy, flavorful side dish.

Pumpkin Pie: A staple dessert of the holiday season, pumpkin pie can easily be made dairy-free. Substitute the evaporated milk with full-fat

coconut milk and use a dairy-free pie crust.

Cheesy Scalloped Potatoes: This comforting side dish can be made dairy-free by using a rich, creamy sauce made from nutritional yeast, almond milk, and vegetable broth. The result is a cheesy, creamy dish without any dairy.

Hot Chocolate: A warm mug of hot chocolate is a holiday favorite. For a dairy-free ver-

sion, heat almond, soy, or oat milk on the stove, and mix in dairy-free dark chocolate until melted. Top with a marshmallow or whipped coconut cream for an indulgent treat.

Holiday Biscuits: Many traditional biscuit recipes include butter and milk. For a dairy-free version, use a plant-based milk and a dairy-free butter substitute.

CREATING AN INCLUSIVE TABLE

Adapting traditional holiday recipes to be dairy-free doesn't mean sacrificing taste or comfort. In fact, these adjustments often result in new, flavorful versions of beloved dishes. By offering dairy-free options, you'll ensure that everyone at your holiday gathering feels welcome and included, regardless of dietary restrictions.

Festive Beverages

The History and Recipes of Classic Holiday Drinks

Nothing evokes holiday cheer quite like festive beverages. They warm the body, soothe the soul and add a splash of tradition to holiday celebrations. Here's a look at some classic holiday drinks, their histories, and simple recipes to bring these flavors to your holiday table.

EGGNOG: A HOLIDAY CLASSIC

Eggnog, a rich, creamy drink typically spiced with nutmeg, has roots in medieval England. Originally a beverage for the aristocracy, it gained popularity in America due to the abundance of farm products.

Recipe: Combine four egg yolks with 1/3 cup of sugar. Stir in two cups of milk, one cup of heavy cream and a pinch of nutmeg. For those who enjoy a spiked version, add 3/4 cup of dark rum or bourbon.

MULLED WINE: WARM AND SPICED

Mulled wine, or spiced warm wine, has origins in Rome. The Romans heated wine to warm up during cold winters and later, the practice spread across their empire.

Recipe: Combine one bottle of red wine, the zest of one orange, eight cloves, two cinnamon sticks, and three-star anise in a pot. Add 1/4 cup of sugar or honey and simmer gently for 20 minutes.



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HOT CHOCOLATE: SWEET COMFORT

Hot chocolate traces back to the Mayans and Aztecs who drank a version made from ground cacao beans. Spanish explorers brought it to Europe, where it evolved into the sweet drink enjoyed today.

Recipe: Heat two cups of milk with 3.5 ounces of quality dark chocolate, and 1-2 tablespoons of sugar. Stir until smooth and top with whipped cream if desired.

WASSAIL: A TOAST TO HEALTH

Wassail, a hot, mulled

punch, has origins in medieval England. The name comes from the Anglo-Saxon phrase 'waes hael', meaning 'be well'.

Recipe: In a large pot, combine four cups of apple cider, one cup of orange juice, four whole cloves, two cinnamon sticks and one sliced and cored apple. Simmer for at least an hour before serving.

HOT BUTTERED RUM: RICH INDULGENCE

Hot buttered rum, a warm cocktail made with rum, butter, hot water or cider, a sweetener, and various spices, originated in colonial America,

where rum was plentiful.

Recipe: Mix two tablespoons of brown sugar, one tablespoon of unsalted butter, a pinch each of nutmeg, cinnamon and cloves in a mug. Pour in two ounces of dark rum and top with boiling water. Stir until well mixed.

CHAMPAGNE COCKTAILS: BUBBLY CELEBRATIONS

No celebration is complete without a little sparkle. Champagne cocktails add a sophisticated touch to holiday celebrations.

Recipe: For a classic Champagne cocktail, place one

sugar cube at the bottom of a champagne flute, add two dashes of bitters, fill the glass with Champagne, and garnish with a twist of lemon.

RAISING A GLASS TO HISTORY

These traditional holiday beverages offer more than just flavors; they bring a piece of history to the most festive holiday celebrations. So this holiday season, while savoring these festive drinks with friends and family, raise a glass to the rich traditions that have brought them to holiday tables around the world.

Globetrotting For the Holidays

Exploring Traditional Holiday Dishes from Around the World

The holiday season, a time of joy, warmth, and togetherness, is celebrated in unique ways across the globe. One universal thread is the special meals shared amongst loved ones. Let's take a culinary journey around the world and explore some traditional holiday dishes.

UNITED STATES: ROAST TURKEY AND PUMPKIN PIE

In the U.S., holiday tables often feature roast turkey as the centerpiece, alongside stuffing, cranberry sauce and mashed potatoes. Dessert often includes pumpkin pie, a creamy treat spiced with cinnamon, nutmeg and cloves.

UNITED KINGDOM: CHRISTMAS PUDDING

In the U.K., the highlight of the holiday meal is often the Christmas pudding. This dense, moist dessert is packed with dried fruits and often doused in brandy and set alight before being served.

GERMANY: CHRISTSTOLLEN

In Germany, holiday celebrations often feature Christstollen, a dense, buttery bread filled with dried fruit, nuts, and spices, and topped with a dusting of powdered sugar.

MEXICO: TAMALES

In Mexico, making tamales is a beloved holiday tradition. These bundles of corn dough, often filled with meats, cheeses or fruits, are wrapped in corn husks and steamed.

ITALY: PANETTONE

In Italy, Panettone, a sweet, dome-



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shaped bread filled with candied fruits and raisins, is a holiday staple. It's often enjoyed with a glass of sweet wine or a cup of hot coffee.

AUSTRALIA: PRAWNS AND PAVLOVA

In Australia, where December means summer, holiday meals often include prawns cooked on the barbeque. Dessert may be Pavlova, a meringue-based treat topped with whipped cream and fresh fruit.

JAPAN: KFC AND CHRISTMAS CAKE

In Japan, a unique holiday tradition has emerged in recent decades: eating KFC. This started with a successful marketing campaign in the 1970s. Christmas cake, a light sponge cake topped with whipped cream and strawberries, is also popular.

SWEDEN: JULBORD

In Sweden, a holiday feast, or Julbord, often includes dishes such as pickled herring, Swedish meatballs, and Jansson's Temptation, a creamy

potato and anchovy casserole.

TRADITIONS UNITE US

These diverse dishes reflect the rich cultural traditions and local resources of each region. Despite their differences, they all share a common purpose: bringing family and friends together to celebrate and give thanks.

Incorporating international dishes into your holiday celebrations can add a global touch to your feast and serve as a reminder of the worldwide spirit of unity and goodwill during this special season.

Gifts From the Kitchen

Creating Homemade Food Gifts for the Holidays

There's something truly special about homemade holiday gifts. They convey a personal touch that store-bought items can't match. For those who enjoy cooking and baking, crafting homemade food gifts can be a joyous part of the holiday season.

SWEET TREATS

Candies and cookies are traditional homemade food gifts. Fudge, peppermint bark and truffles can be packaged in festive tins. Cookies, from gingerbread to shortbread, are always a hit. Consider including a recipe card so recipients can recreate their favorites.

SAVORY SURPRISES

Not everyone has a sweet tooth. For those who prefer savory treats, consider homemade seasoned nuts, marinated olives, or a jar of your signature salsa or barbecue sauce.

GOURMET MIXES

For a gift with a longer shelf life, consider assembling dry gourmet mixes. Layer the ingredients for a soup, hot chocolate or cookie mix in a glass jar. Attach a label with instructions on how to complete the recipe.

PRESERVES AND PICKLES

If you've preserved fruits or vegetables, the holiday season is a great time to share your



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bounty. Jars of homemade jams, jellies, pickles or chutneys make for flavorful gifts that can be enjoyed long after the holiday season has passed.

BAKED GOODS

Freshly baked breads or pastries can be a welcome gift. Consider a loaf of banana or zucchini bread, a batch of muf-

fins, or a breakfast pastry like a coffee cake. Remember these gifts need to be consumed quickly, so time your delivery appropriately.

GIFT PRESENTATION

Presentation is key when it comes to homemade food gifts. Invest in attractive packaging. Glass jars, festive tins, cello-

phane bags tied with ribbon, or holiday-themed boxes can all add to the appeal of your gift.

Remember to attach a label or tag identifying what's inside. If the item has a short shelf-life, it's helpful to include that information as well. If the recipient has dietary restrictions, make sure to note any relevant details, such as if the

item is gluten-free or dairy-free.

Creating homemade food gifts can be a time-consuming endeavor, but it's also an opportunity to share a piece of yourself. These gifts represent not only your culinary skills, but also your time, thought, and care — making them a true gift from the heart.

Pumpkin Spice and Everything Nice

The Science Behind Our Holiday Flavor Obsession

From lattes to candles, the scent and flavor of pumpkin spice has become synonymous with the holiday season. But what makes this spice blend so appealing? It turns out there's some science behind our obsession.

THE ANATOMY OF PUMPKIN SPICE

Pumpkin spice doesn't actually contain any pumpkin. Instead, it's a blend of spices commonly used in pumpkin pie, including cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, cloves and allspice.

These spices combine to create a warming, aromatic blend that we associate with comfort and nostalgia.

COMFORT AND NOSTALGIA

From a psychological perspective, the appeal of pumpkin spice often comes from its connection to happy memories and traditions, like holiday meals and celebrations.

Our brains make strong connections between scents, flavors and experiences, and this association can evoke a sense of nostalgia when we encounter these smells and tastes again.

A SENSORY EXPERIENCE

From a physiological standpoint, the aromatic compounds in pumpkin spice have a significant impact on our



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senses.

Cinnamon contains cinnamaldehyde, which gives it a sweet, aromatic scent and a warming sensation on the tongue. Nutmeg has a compound called myristicin, which contributes to its sweet and slightly woody flavor.

Ginger contains gingerol, which provides its distinctive spicy kick.

The combination of these sensations—sweet, spicy,

warm—triggers a positive response in our brains. It's a flavor profile that hits all the right notes, which is why it's so pleasing to our palates.

LIMITED AVAILABILITY

There's also the matter of supply and demand. Pumpkin spice flavored items are typically only available for a limited time each year, which can create a sense of urgency and anticipation. This limited avail-

ability can make these items seem more special and desirable.

PUMPKIN SPICE BEYOND THE LATTE

While the pumpkin spice latte may be the most well-known application of this flavor blend, it's far from the only one. Pumpkin spice can be used in a variety of sweet and savory dishes, from breakfast foods like oatmeal and pan-

cakes, to desserts like cookies and cakes, and even in savory dishes like soups and stews.

Our love for pumpkin spice goes beyond a simple flavor preference.

It's a combination of physiological responses, psychological connections and clever marketing. So, the next time you enjoy a pumpkin spice treat, you'll know there's a bit of science behind every delicious bite.

Citrus Wonders

Incorporating Winter Citrus Fruits into Your Holiday Recipes

Winter's chill might seem like an unlikely time for fresh produce, but it's peak season for citrus fruits. Their bright flavors and vibrant colors make them perfect for livening up holiday dishes.

ORANGES: SWEET AND TANGY

Oranges, with their sweet, juicy segments, are a classic winter fruit. They're versatile and can enhance a variety of dishes. In baking, orange zest can add a fragrant, citrusy note to cookies, cakes and pies. The juice, meanwhile, is a fantastic base for tangy salad dressings and marinades for meats.

GRAPEFRUIT: TART AND REFRESHING

Grapefruits, known for their tangy flavor and abundant juice, can be a refreshing addition to the holiday table. Sections of grapefruit can be added to salads for a tart, juicy element. The juice can also be used in sauces, cocktails and sorbets, while the zest adds a lovely aroma and flavor to baked goods.

LEMONS: ZESTY AND VERSATILE

Lemons, though available year-round, are at their juiciest during winter. Their zest and juice are kitchen workhorses. They can be used in everything from lemon bars and cookies to tangy marinades and sauces. Lemon slices also make an aromatic and attractive garnish for holiday dishes and drinks.

LIMES: BOLD AND FRAGRANT

Limes, with their bold, aromatic flavor, can bring a unique twist to holiday recipes. The zest and juice can be used in a similar manner to lemons, and



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limes also pair well with spicy flavors in savory dishes. In sweets, they can provide a delightful contrast to the rich, sugary flavors typically found in holiday desserts.

MANDARINS: PETITE AND SWEET

Mandarins, small and easy-to-peel, are a popular winter citrus fruit. They're fantastic eaten out of hand or tossed into salads, and their juice can be used in everything from salad dressings to cocktails. The zest of mandarins

can also add a sweet, citrusy note to baked goods.

CLEMENTINES: JUICY GEMS

Clementines, a type of mandarin, are sweet, juicy and often seedless. They're perfect for snacking, but also shine when used in recipes. They can be used in much the same way as mandarins, and their small size makes them perfect for garnishing holiday drinks.

CITRUS HEALTH BENEFITS

Beyond their culinary uses, citrus

fruits also offer a boost of nutrition. They're high in vitamin C and other antioxidants, which can support immune health — particularly useful during the winter months.

Including citrus fruits in holiday recipes can bring a splash of sunshine to the winter season. Their bright, zesty flavors can cut through the richness of traditional holiday fare, offering a refreshing balance. As you prepare your holiday meals, consider reaching for these vibrant fruits to add a burst of citrus wonder to your table.