

# SPICE OF THE MONTH CLUB

February 2023

## Join us to discuss

*Tuesday, 02/28 / 6:00pm / Conference Room*

Spend the month cooking with your spice and join us to discuss your opinions, experiences, and recipes!



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## This month's spice: Cumin

### History

Cumin is believed to be indigenous to the Middle East and was well known to the ancients as far back as 5000 BCE. Cumin seeds have been found in the pyramids of the pharaohs, and it is known that the Egyptians used it in mummification before they started using cinnamon and cloves. In the first century CE, the Roman scholar Pliny referred to cumin as the "best appetizer of all condiments."

Cumin is now grown predominantly in Iran, which has a reputation for producing the best-quality "green" cumin seed. Other major producing countries of cumin seeds are India, Morocco, and Turkey.

### Use

While many cooks may find cumin overtly pungent, do keep in mind that its flavor need not dominate. With judicious application, cumin can be surprisingly effective in balancing and rounding out the bouquet of other spices. Cumin is used extensively in Indian curries; it is also used with rice and vegetables, in breads and when making pickles and chutneys. Mexican chile powder is usually a simple mixture of chile, paprika, cumin, and salt.



# Stir-Fried Beef with Cumin, Onions, and Chile

*Total prep and cook time: 40 minutes*

*Yields 4 servings.*

## INGREDIENTS:

Chile paste:

1/2 cup dried long red chiles

Many types of chile are dried for use. Basic dried red chiles are generally a bit hotter than their fresh counter-parts and have a slightly sweet caramel flavor not found in fresh varieties. Asian grocers carry a variety of them.

1 tsp fine sea salt

5 shallots, roughly chopped

5 cloves garlic, chopped

1 tbsp ground cumin, lightly toasted

To toast ground cumin: Place it in a dry skillet over medium heat and cook gently, shaking the pan often, for 1 to 2 minutes, until slightly browned and aromatic.

Remove from pan immediately.

Lentils and rice:

1 tbsp butter

1 tbsp oil

1 cup cooked Puy lentils

1 cup broken rice vermicelli

1 cup basmati rice, rinsed and drained

1 tsp ground cinnamon

1/2 tsp ground nutmeg

1/2 tsp fine sea salt

3 cups water

## STEPS:

- Chile Paste:** In a small bowl, cover dried long chiles with warm water and set aside for 10 minutes to soften; drain well (discard soaking liquid). Using a sharp knife, chop chiles. Using mortar and pestle, combine chopped chiles with salt and pound into a paste. Add shallots, garlic, and cumin and pound until well combined. Set aside.
- Beef:** In wok over high heat, heat oil until bubbles appear at the bottom. Add dried small chiles and cook, stirring occasionally, for 2 to 3 minutes, until dark red. Using a slotted spoon, transfer chiles to a plate lined with paper towels. Add shallots and cook for about 3 minutes, until just beginning to brown. Using slotted spoon, transfer shallots to a separate plate lined with paper towels. Discard all but 2 tbsp frying oil from wok and set aside.
- In a large bowl, combine beef, cumin, ground chile, salt, sugar, and fried chilis.
- In wok, heat reserved oil over high heat. Add beef, with spices, and cook, stirring constantly, for about 2 minutes, until just starting to brown. Add prepared chile paste, breaking it up with the back of a wooden spoon. Add tamarind water and fish sauce. When beef is just cooked through, add sliced onion, cilantro, and reserved fried shallots. Cook, stirring, for 1 minute, until heated through. Serve immediately.

Beef:

1 cup oil

5 dried small red chiles

5 shallots, finely sliced

1 10oz beef rump, sliced across

the grain into 1-inch pieces

1 tsp ground cumin

Pinch of ground medium-hot

chile\*\*Ground Kashmiri chile is

flavorsome and versatile. You can

find it at most Indian markets at

varying levels of heat, depending on

the amount of seeds and membrane

ground with the chile

Pinch of fine sea salt

Pinch of granulated sugar

2 tsp tamarind water

2 tsp fish sauce

1/2 white onion

1/2 cup lightly packed fresh

cilantro, stems and leaves

# Chile con Carne

*Total prep and cook time: 2 hours, 25 minutes*

*Yields 6-8 servings.*

## INGREDIENTS:

1 ancho chile pepper  
2 dried chipotle chili peppers  
2 tsp whole cumin seeds  
1 tsp whole coriander seeds  
2 lbs lean ground beef  
2 tbsp oil  
1 onion, chopped  
4 cloves garlic, minced  
1 long green finger chile, seeded and finely chopped  
1 tbsp dried oregano  
1/4 tsp ground cinnamon  
1 14oz can crushed tomatoes  
1 tbsp tomato paste  
1 cup beef stock  
1 tsp fine sea salt  
1 14oz can kidney beans  
1/4 oz dark chocolate (70-90% cocoa solids)  
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

## STEPS:

1. In a heatproof bowl, cover ancho and chipotle chiles with boiling water and set aside for 30 minutes. Drain, discarding soaking liquid and stems. Chop finely and set aside.
2. In a dry skillet over medium heat, toast cumin and coriander seeds, stirring frequently, until fragrant, about 3 minutes. Transfer to a clean spice grinder or use a mortar and pestle to grind until fine. Set aside.
3. In a large, heavy saucepan or Dutch oven over medium-high heat, brown beef in 2 or 3 batches, being careful not to crowd the pan and using a spoon to break up any large pieces (for best results, the beef should resemble small grains), about 10-12 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer cooked beef into a bowl, discarding excess fat in pan. Set aside.
4. In the same saucepan over low heat, heat oil. Add onion, garlic, and green chile and cook, stirring occasionally, until onion is softened, about 3 minutes. Stir in ground toasted cumin and coriander, oregano, cinnamon, and reserved soaked chiles; cook for another 3 minutes, until well combined. Add reserved meat, tomatoes, tomato paste, stock, and salt. Cook, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes, then cover and simmer for 1 hour, stirring occasionally. Add kidney beans and chocolate and simmer, uncovered, stirring occasionally, for 20 to 30 minutes, until sauce is reduced but not dry. Season with additional salt if necessary and pepper to taste. Serve immediately.

## TIPS:

- For extra heat, add 1 tbsp chopped chipotle pepper in adobo sauce with the meat and tomatoes in Step 4.
- If you prefer to make the chili ahead, cool, transfer to an airtight container, and refrigerate for up to 3 days, or freeze for up to 3 months.
- The canned kidney beans can be replaced with 2 cups cooked beans.
- For a chunkier chili, substitute an equal amount of cubed beef shin or flank steak for the ground beef.

# Cumin-Lime Shrimp With Ginger

*Total prep and cook time: 15 minutes*

*Yields 4 serving.*

## INGREDIENTS:

**1½ lbs shrimp, peeled and deveined (16 to 20 shrimp)**

**1 tsp ground cumin**

**Kosher salt**

**3 tbsp olive oil**

**1½ tsp grated ginger**

**1 tsp grated garlic**

**Pinch of red-pepper flakes (optional)**

**¼ cup lime juice**

**1 tsp lime zest**

**3 tbsp roughly chopped cilantro**

**Flaky salt (optional)**

## STEPS:

1. In a large bowl, toss together the shrimp and the cumin until well coated. Season with kosher salt and toss again.
2. Heat the olive oil in a 12-inch skillet over medium heat. Add half the shrimp to the pan in one layer and cook undisturbed until they just start turning pink, about 1 minute. Flip and cook for about 1 minute more, then remove from the pan and set aside. They may not be fully cooked at this time, and that's O.K. Repeat with remaining shrimp and leave in the pan.
3. Add the reserved shrimp back to the pan with any juices that have accumulated. Stir in the ginger, garlic and red-pepper flakes, if using, and cook for about 30 seconds, stirring to make sure the garlic doesn't burn. Add the lime juice to pan and scrape up any brown bits that have formed at the bottom of the pan. Cook until the mixture is reduced by about half, about 1 minute more. Stir in the lime zest and scatter with the cilantro. Season with flaky salt, if desired.