

# SPICE OF THE MONTH CLUB

August 2024

**Join us to discuss**

*Tuesday, 8/27 / 6:00pm / Annex*

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: Fennel Seed**

## History

Fennel is indigenous to Southern Europe and the Mediterranean region. Since antiquity the seeds have been used as a condiment by the Chinese, Indians, and Egyptians. The Romans used it as a spice and a vegetable, which played a role in its introduction to Northern Europe, where it has been known for 900 years. Its cultivation was ordered by Charlemagne.



## Use

The whole plant has uses, with the leaves being used similarly to dill and the bulbs cooked as vegetables. The seeds are added to soups, breads, sausages, pasta, and tomato dishes, as well as pickles, sauerkraut, and salads. In Indian and Asian cooking, fennel seeds are nearly always roasted, which gives them quite a different sweet, spicy flavor.

# Rigatoni with Tomatoes, Bacon, and Fennel

*Yields 4 servings*

## INGREDIENTS:

- 6 slices bacon, cut into ½-inch pieces
  - 1 onion, chopped fine
  - Salt and pepper
  - 3 garlic cloves, minced
  - 2 anchovy fillets, rinsed, patted dry, and minced
  - 2 teaspoons fennel seeds, lightly cracked
  - ¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes
  - 1 (28-ounce) can diced tomatoes, drained with juice reserved
  - 2½ cups chicken broth
  - 2 cups water, plus extra as needed
  - 1 pound rigatoni
  - ¼ cup grated Pecorino Romano cheese, plus extra for serving
  - 2 tablespoons minced fresh parsley
- NOTE: You can substitute 1 lb of ziti or penne for the rigatoni



## STEPS:

1. Cook bacon in Dutch oven over medium-high heat until crisp, about 5 minutes. Using slotted spoon, transfer bacon to paper towel-lined plate; set aside for serving. Pour off all but 2 tablespoons of fat from pot.
2. Add onion and ¼ teaspoon salt to fat left in pot and cook over medium heat until onion is softened, about 5 minutes. Stir in garlic, anchovies, fennel seeds, and pepper flakes and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute. Stir in tomatoes and cook until dry and slightly darkened, about 5 minutes.
3. Stir in broth, water, and reserved tomato juice, scraping up any browned bits, and bring to boil. Stir in pasta, return to vigorous simmer, and cook, stirring often, until pasta is tender, 15 to 20 minutes. Off heat, stir in Pecorino and parsley and adjust sauce consistency with extra hot water as needed. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve, sprinkling individual portions with reserved bacon and extra Pecorino.

# Grilled Chicken Satay

*Total prep and cook time: 35*

*minutes*

*Yields 6 servings*

## INGREDIENTS:

### Satay sauce:

1 tbsp ground fennel seeds

2 tbsp Malay curry powder

1 ½ palm sugar or packed light brown sugar

1 tsp oil

1 cup crunchy peanut butter

1 tsp soy sauce

Water

### Chicken:

4 boneless skinless chicken breasts (about 2lbs total) cut into 1 ½- inch cubes

1 tsp oil

1 tsp sea salt and black pepper

1 cucumber, peeled, seeded, and cut into 4-inch matchsticks

6 green onions, white and green parts, julienned

Malay curry powder:

6 tsp ground coriander seed

3 tsp ground cumin

3 tsp ground fennel seed

1 ½ tsp ground Alleppey turmeric

1 tsp ground ginger

1 tsp ground cinnamon

¾ tsp freshly ground black pepper

½ tsp ground yellow mustard seed

¼ ground cloves

¼ tsp ground cardamom seed

¼ ground chile, adjust to suit taste

Combine ingredients in a bowl and stir well to ensure even distribution. Transfer to an airtight container and store in a cool dry place up to 1 year.

## STEPS:

1. **SATAY SAUCE:** In a dry saucepan over medium heat, cook ground fennel, stirring constantly, for 30 seconds. Stir in curry powder and cook for 30 seconds. Stir in sugar and oil. Cook, stirring, for 1 to 2 minutes, until a rich, dark paste forms. Add peanut butter and soy sauce and mix well. Add water to reach desired consistency. Remove from heat and set aside.
2. **CHICKEN:** In a large bowl, toss chicken with oil and season with salt and pepper to taste. Thread equal portions onto 6 skewers. Cover and set aside in refrigerator until ready to cook.
3. Heat a barbecue or grill pan to high. Cook skewers until chicken is cooked through and slightly charred (this adds great flavor), 4 or 5 minutes per side. Serve hot, garnished with cucumber and green onion. Serve satay sauce overtop or on the side for dipping.

# Baked Macaroni and Cheese with Sausage and Peppers

*Total prep and cook time: 1hr 35min*

*Yields 8 to 10 servings*

## INGREDIENTS:

1 pound rotini  
½ teaspoon table salt, plus salt for cooking pasta  
1 tablespoon unsalted butter  
1 pound hot or sweet Italian sausage, casings removed  
2 bell peppers (1 red and 1 green), stemmed, seeded, and sliced thin  
1 onion, halved and sliced thin  
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour

## STEPS:

## INGREDIENTS (cont.):

1 ½ cups heavy cream  
1 ¼ cups whole milk  
10 ounces American cheese, shredded (2½ cups)  
10 ounces fontina cheese, shredded (2 ½ cups), divided  
4 ounces Parmesan cheese, shredded (1 1/3 cups)  
2 tablespoons Dijon mustard  
2 teaspoons pepper  
2 teaspoons paprika  
2 teaspoons fennel seeds (optional)

1. Adjust oven rack to upper-middle position and heat oven to 375 degrees. Bring 4 quarts water to boil in Dutch oven. Add pasta and 1 tablespoon salt and cook until just al dente. Drain pasta; set aside.
2. Add butter to now-empty pot and melt over medium-high heat. Add sausage and cook, breaking up meat with wooden spoon, until sausage begins to render its fat, about 2 minutes. Stir in bell peppers, onion, and salt and cook until sausage is no longer pink and vegetables are softened, 5 to 7 minutes. Transfer 1 cup sausage mixture to small bowl; set aside.
3. Stir flour into remaining sausage mixture in pot and cook for 1 minute. Stir in cream and milk, bring to boil, and cook until sauce is thickened, about 2 minutes. Add American cheese, 1 cup fontina, Parmesan, mustard, and pepper and cook, stirring constantly, until cheese is completely melted, about 1 minute. Off heat, stir pasta into sauce until thoroughly coated.
4. Transfer pasta mixture to 13 by 9-inch baking dish and spread into even layer. Sprinkle with remaining 1½ cups fontina; reserved sausage mixture; paprika; and fennel seeds, if using.
5. Bake until topping is lightly browned and filling is bubbling, 18 to 20 minutes. Let cool for 20 minutes. Serve.
6. TO MAKE AHEAD: Fully assembled casserole, prepared through step 4, can be wrapped tightly in plastic wrap and refrigerated for up to 2 days. When ready to serve, remove plastic and bake until heated through, 40 to 45 minutes.