

THE SPICE CLUB



ANISE

PIMPINELLA ANISUM L.

Botany: Anise grows up to 3 feet tall, with white-yellow flowers in umbrella-like clusters. Its seeds contain essential oil rich in trans-anethole, responsible for its sweet, licorice-like aroma. Though similar in flavor, it is distinct from Chinese and Japanese star anise. From its Mediterranean origins, anise spread to Europe, the Americas, and Asia, and is now widely cultivated.

History: Used since ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome, anise was valued for aiding digestion, easing pain, and stimulating milk production. It spread to India, China, and later, the Americas. Traditional medicine systems in the Middle East, Iran, Turkey, and North Africa used it for ailments ranging from respiratory and digestive issues to infections and inflammation.

Culinary Uses: Anise is used whole or ground in pastries, cookies, meat dishes, and teas. It is popular in Mediterranean and Asian cuisines and also flavors drinks like ouzo (Greece), pastis (France), sambuca (Italy), and raki (Turkey).



Anise Biscotti

[Recipe from Cookpad.com](https://www.cookpad.com)

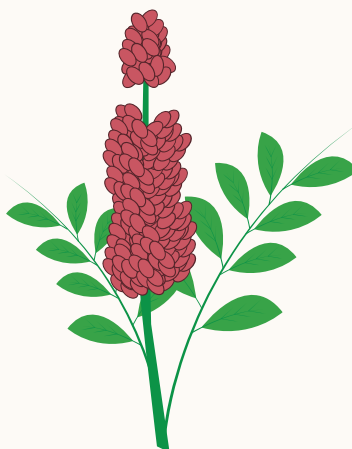
Ingredients

2 cups all-purpose flour	3/4 cup granulated sugar
2 teaspoons baking powder	1/2 cup olive oil
1 pinch salt	1 teaspoon vanilla extract
4 eggs	1 ½ teaspoons anise powder

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F (180°C).
2. Grease, flour, or line a loaf pan with parchment paper.
3. In a large bowl, sift together the flour, baking powder, and salt. Set aside.
4. In the bowl of a mixer with a whisk attachment, beat the eggs and sugar on medium speed until light and fluffy, about 3–4 minutes.
5. Add the olive oil and vanilla extract. Beat for 1 minute.
6. Add the flour mixture and anise. Mix until just combined.
7. Pour the batter into the loaf pan.
8. Bake for 30–35 minutes, or until set to the touch.
9. Remove from the pan and let cool slightly.
10. With a serrated knife, slice into pieces about 1/4 inch (0.5 cm) thick.
11. Place the slices on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper and bake for another 5–8 minutes (or longer if you want them crispier), turning them for even baking.



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SUMAC

RHUS GENUS OF THE ANACARDIACEAE FAMILY

Botany: Sumac refers to deciduous shrubs and small trees in the genus *Rhus*, related to cashews and mangoes. They produce bright red, edible berries and grow widely across temperate and subtropical regions in the Mediterranean, Africa, Asia, and North America. Over 150 species exist, but the main culinary types are *Rhus coriaria* in the Mediterranean and *Rhus typhina*, *R. glabra*, and *R. copallinum* in North America.

History: Sumac's origins are widespread and ancient, used across the Mediterranean, Middle East, and the Americas. Its name comes from Old French, Arabic, and Syriac words meaning "dark red." Greeks and Romans used sumac for dye, tanning, medicine, and seasoning before lemons became common. Indigenous North Americans used the berries, bark, wood, and sprouts for food, dyes, medicinal washes, smoking mixtures, and making pipe stems.

Culinary Uses: Sumac is valued for its bright, lemony, slightly fruity flavor that adds acidity without liquid. Usually dried and ground, it is central to Middle Eastern cooking, seasoning kebabs, meats, salads, labneh, and appearing in za'atar. Crushed berries can make tart broths for dishes like Iraqi dolma or refreshing drinks. It is also used in both North American and Middle Eastern kitchens in dairy dishes, desserts, and beverages.



Sumac Roast Chicken

Based on a recipe from The Spice Way

Ingredients

1.5 lbs chicken thighs	1/2 tsp paprika
1 tbsp olive oil	1/2 tsp garlic powder
1 tsp sumac	Salt and pepper

1. Mix spices and oil into a paste.
2. Rub onto chicken and let marinate 1–2 hours.
3. Place the chicken in a single layer in an 8- or 9-inch baking dish. No need to grease the dish, just lay the chicken inside.
4. Arrange a rack in the middle of the oven and heat the oven to 425°F.
5. Roast until the chicken reaches an internal temperature of 165°F, about 20 minutes.
6. Remove the baking dish from the oven, cover with foil, and let the chicken rest for 10 minutes.



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CHINESE FIVE SPICE

A BLEND OF STAR ANISE, CLOVES, CINNAMON (OR CASSIA), SICHUAN PEPPERCORNS, AND FENNEL SEEDS

Botany: Star Anise grows on an aromatic evergreen with leathery leaves and star-shaped pods. Cloves come from an evergreen tree whose buds turn from pale to green to red before harvest. Chinese cinnamon (cassia) is a Southeast Asian evergreen with leathery leaves and bark taken from young shoots. Sichuan pepper comes from a deciduous shrub with glossy compound leaves and red or green fruits that dry in fall; despite its name, it's related to citrus, not pepper. Fennel is a tall temperate plant with feathery leaves and golden flowers, and its aromatic “seeds” are actually dried split fruits harvested when they shift from yellow-green to gray-green.

History: Chinese Five-Spice likely developed over 2,000 years ago during the Han Dynasty, when spices were documented for both culinary and medicinal value. Blending sweet, sour, pungent, bitter, and salty flavors mirrored the five traditional elements—earth, fire, water, metal, and wood—creating harmony in body and mind. Imperial cooks valued it for enhancing flavor, tenderizing meat, and balancing rich or gamey dishes.

Culinary Uses: Chinese Five Spice is now found in fusion cooking, barbecue rubs, and even desserts like truffles and spiced cookies. A little can make fruit taste sweeter and works well as a rub or marinade for pork, duck, or goose. Slow cooking and roasting help meats and vegetables absorb its deep flavors and it shines in stir-fries, soups, fried rice, curries, braises, chutneys, and spice cakes. A small amount is all that's needed to transform a dish.



Char Siu Pork - Chinese BBQ Pork

Author: Nagi | RecipeTin Eats

Ingredients

1.2 - 1.5kg / 2.4 - 3lb pork shoulder	2 tbsp soy sauce (all purpose or light)
1 1/2 tbsp brown sugar (white also ok)	1 tsp Chinese five spice powder
1/4 cup honey; 2 tbsp add'l honey (for marinade)	1 tbsp oil (vegetable or canola)
1/4 cup hoisin sauce	2 tsp red food coloring, optional

1. Cut pork in half to make two long strips.
2. Mix marinade ingredients in a bowl.
3. Place the pork and marinade in a stain proof container or ziplock bag. Marinate 24 to 48 hours in the fridge. (Three hours is the bare minimum).
4. Preheat oven to 320F and line a tray with foil. Place a rack in the tray (recommended, but not critical).
5. Remove pork from the marinade and place on the rack/directly in the pan. Save marinade.
6. Roast for 30 minutes.
7. Meanwhile, pour reserved marinade in a saucepan. Mix in extra honey. Bring to a simmer over medium-high and cook for 2 minutes until syrupy. Remove from heat.
8. Remove pork from oven. Baste pork with marinade, then turn, basting other side. Roast for 30 more minutes. Save the additional marinade.
9. Remove pork from oven. Brush with marinade again, then turn, repeat, and roast for 20 more minutes. If it chars too quickly, cover the pork with foil.
10. Baste again, then bake for a further 10 minutes until caramelized and sticky. Meat should be tender but not falling apart. Allow to rest for 10 minutes before slicing.



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CARAWAY

CARUM CARVI

Botany: Caraway is a biennial herb in the parsley family, closely related to fennel, dill, anise, and cumin. In the first year, it produces a rosette of fine, feathery leaves; in the second year, it sends up a one to two foot flowering stem topped with small white or pale pink umbels. Its distinctive aromatic seeds—technically small fruits—are brown, curved, and ridged, with an earthy, slightly citrusy flavor and a hint of anise.

History: Caraway seeds have been found in prehistoric sites in Mesopotamia and Switzerland, showing that people were using the plant thousands of years ago. The Greeks and Romans incorporated caraway into cooking, medicine, and even love potions. During the Middle Ages, it became common in European monastery herbal texts and household kitchens. Folklore also attributed protective powers to caraway, with people placing it in barns, cradles, or personal keepsakes to prevent wandering or theft. By the early modern period, caraway was a staple flavor in German, Dutch, Scandinavian, and Central European cooking.

Culinary Uses: Caraway is valued for its warm, earthy flavor and natural digestive qualities. It is a signature ingredient in European rye bread and black bread and is commonly added to cheeses such as Havarti, Tilsit, and Dutch Leyden. It pairs well with cabbage and sauerkraut, where it balances strong flavors and helps with digestion. It also appears in stews, roasted meat dishes, potato dishes, and traditional baked goods such as Irish seed cakes and Scandinavian pastries. Caraway is also used to flavor traditional spirits, including Kümmel, Akvavit, and Krabambuli.





Traditional British Seed Cake

[Recipe from DaringGourmet.com](http://DaringGourmet.com)

Ingredients

2 cups all-purpose flour	3 large eggs
2 1/2 teaspoons baking powder	zest of one lemon
1/4 teaspoon salt	2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
11 tablespoons butter	2 tablespoons milk
3/4 cup granulated sugar	2 teaspoons caraway seeds
2 tablespoons neutral-tasting oil	

1. Preheat the oven to 350F.
2. Combine the flour, baking powder, and salt in a bowl and set aside.
3. In a large mixing bowl, cream the butter and sugar until pale and fluffy. Add the oil and mix until combined. Add one egg at a time, mixing after each one. Add the lemon zest and vanilla extract and mix until combined.
4. Add the flour mixture and mix just until combined.
5. Add the milk and beat just until combined. If your batter is too dry add a little more milk. Be careful not to over-mix the batter.
6. Mix in the caraway seeds.
7. Scoop the batter into a non-stick 9x5 loaf pan, spreading the top smooth the back of the spoon.
8. Bake on the middle rack for 45-55 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean.
9. Let the cake rest in the pan for 5 minutes and then remove from the pan and transfer to a wire rack to cool.



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JUNIPER BERRIES

JUNIPERUS COMMUNIS

Botany: Juniper berries grow on shrubs of the *Juniperus* genus—evergreen conifers featuring sharp, needle-like leaves and small, berry-like cones. These “berries” take two to three years to ripen, changing from green to deep blue or purple as they mature and develop their intense piney, resinous scent and slightly sweet flavor. Juniper grows widely across the Northern Hemisphere in rocky, dry soils and is extremely hardy.

History: Juniper has a long history throughout Europe, Asia, and North America, where it was used for medicine, seasoning, and spiritual purposes. Ancient Egyptians and Greeks used it for healing, and in medieval Europe it was burned to cleanse homes and prevent illness. Many Indigenous peoples of North America also used juniper in ceremonies and as a medicinal plant, and some species provided both food and flavoring. In addition, juniper bark was an important material for practical items such as cradles, sandals, torches, bedding, infant carriers, woven bags, and even as a binder in clay.

Culinary Uses: Juniper berries are used in small amounts because of their bold flavor. They are a classic seasoning for game meats, pork, venison, cabbage dishes, sauerkraut, stews, and braises, where they add a woody, slightly sweet, peppery note. They are also essential in flavoring gin (whose name derives from the French *genièvre*) and other European liqueurs. Whole berries are usually lightly crushed before cooking to release their oils and aroma, while ground juniper blends evenly into rubs and marinades.



Garlic Potatoes with Juniper Berries

[Recipe from Food.com](#)

Ingredients

3 tbsp extra virgin olive oil	coarse-grain sea salt & black pepper, to taste
2 tbsp dried juniper berries, lightly crushed	finely chopped fresh oregano
8 large garlic cloves	triangles of toasted whole wheat bread
1.5 lbs. tiny new potatoes	(optional)
1 small lemon, juice of	

1. Heat the oven to 350F.
2. Pour the olive oil into a heavy shallow baking dish large enough to hold the potatoes in a single layer.
3. Sprinkle the juniper berries over the oil and place the dish in an oven for a few minutes to warm.
4. Trim off the stem ends of the garlic cloves and rub off any feathery outer skin.
5. Place the potatoes and garlic in the warm dish and roll them in the olive oil to lightly coat.
6. Bake 10 minutes and roll the potatoes and garlic in the olive oil once more.
7. Reduce the oven temperature to 300F and bake uncovered for 50 minutes or until the potatoes are just tender.
8. Roll the potatoes in the olive oil to coat once more and transfer to a warm platter.
9. Sprinkle with the lemon juice, salt and pepper, and oregano.
10. Serve hot or warm, with toast, if desired.



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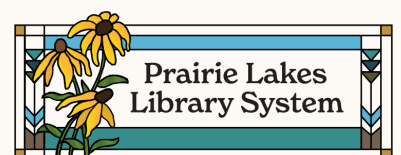
LAVENDER

LAVANDULA

Botany: Lavender is a hardy, long-living, aromatic shrub native to the Mediterranean with narrow gray-green leaves and tall spikes of purple, blue, pink, or white flowers. It thrives in sunny, dry, well-drained soils and stores its fragrant essential oils in glands on its leaves and blossoms. In the United States, English lavender and hybrid lavandins are the most commonly cultivated varieties, grown widely in states like California, Washington, and areas of the Southwest where the climate suits their low-water needs.

History: Used since ancient Egypt for perfume and embalming, lavender later became popular with Greeks and Romans for bathing, healing, and scenting homes. In medieval Europe, it was associated with cleansing and protection from illness and by the Victorian era, it was widely grown for soaps, perfumes, and household use. Its cultivation spread worldwide as demand increased. In the 20th and 21st centuries, lavender became a household staple in wellness products, natural medicine, and personal care.

Culinary Uses: Culinary lavender offers a sweet, floral flavor with light mint and citrus notes. Small amounts are used in herbes de Provence, baked goods, syrups, teas, and beverages, where it adds a delicate aroma without overpowering the dish. It pairs well with both sweet and savory dishes, making it a versatile addition to modern recipes. In the U.S., lavender has become increasingly popular in artisanal foods and craft beverages, including chocolates, ice creams, and specialty coffees.





Sweet Lavender Scones

Recipe from uslavender.org

Ingredients

3 cups flour	1/2 teaspoon baking soda
3/4 cup sugar	3/4 cup cold butter, cubed
1 tablespoon baking powder	1 teaspoon vanilla
1 teaspoon dried lavender buds	1 cup buttermilk
1 teaspoon salt	

1. Preheat oven to 425F.
2. Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper.
3. In a food processor, or by hand, mix together all of the dry ingredients.
4. Add the cold butter and process or mix by hand until mixture resembles coarse meal.
5. Add the vanilla to the buttermilk.
6. In a large bowl, add the wet ingredients to the dry ingredients and stir until you have a "shaggy" dough.
7. Transfer to a lightly floured surface and knead a few times, until a dough forms. Divide the dough in half, and pat into two 8-inch rounds.
8. Cut the rounds into eight wedges each and place the wedges on a large cookie sheet.
9. Bake for 13 -15 minutes until golden brown.
10. Transfer to a wire rack and let cool.

Yield: 16 Scones

