

Pumpkin Spice Blend

Ingredients

1 Tbsp ground cinnamon
1 tsp ground ginger
1/2 tsp ground nutmeg
1/4 tsp ground allspice
1/4 to 3/4 tsp ground cloves, to taste

Yields: 2 Tbsp ground spice blend

Instructions

Place the cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, allspice, and cloves in a sieve set over a small bowl; sift to make sure you don't have any clumps of spice.

Mix well, then transfer to an airtight container. Store in a dark, cool space. It will keep for as long as the spices stay fresh.



Sweet Baking Spice Blend

This blend splits the difference between a pumpkin spice blend and an apple pie spice. The white pepper adds a gentle heat and the cardamom brings bright fragrance.

Ingredients

2 (2-in/5-gram) cinnamon sticks, broken into pieces
1 Tbsp green cardamom pods
1 whole nutmeg or 2/3 tsp ground
3/4 tsp whole allspice berries
1/2 tsp white peppercorn

Yields: 1/4 cup ground spice blend

Instructions

Place a small skillet over medium heat. Add the spices and toast, stirring until fragrant, 2 to 4 minutes. Pour into a small bowl and set aside to cool.

Using a spice grinder, clean coffee grinder, or mortar and pestle, grind the cooled spices until fine. *Optional:* Strain the mixture through a fine-mesh strainer to remove clumps.

Store in an airtight container in a cool, dark place for up to 1 year.

TASTE TEST

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NUTMEG

Nutmeg was only grown on a few islands in modern-day Indonesia. Dutch and Portuguese spice traders fought to control the rare ingredient.

Two spices come from the same *Myristica fragrans* tree: nutmeg and mace. Nutmeg fruit contains a small wooden-like egg, which contains nutmeg. The seed covering, aril, is what we know as mace. Every 100 pounds of nutmeg produces 3 1/2 to 4 pounds of mace.

While nutmeg is commonly used in baking, it can also be used in savory dishes including baked fish, sauces, and vegetable dishes. It can also compliment cream or cheese sauces, and can be added to white sauce pizza.

FUN FACTS

Chef Alton Brown is well known for never leaving home without a whole nutmeg and microplane grater. He regularly jokes that he uses it to spice up bad coffee.

Many argue that nutmeg has numerous dietary benefits. Nutmeg contains essential minerals like copper, potassium, calcium, and manganese. Be careful though, too much nutmeg can have psychoactive effects caused by a compound called myristicin.



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Creamed Spinach Pasta

from *New York Times Cooking*, Creamed Spinach Pasta by Colu Henry,



Yields: 4 to 6 servings

Ingredients

1 cup whole-milk ricotta
Kosher salt and black pepper
1 lb long pasta, fettuccine or tagliatelle
3 Tbsp pine nuts (optional)
4 Tbsp unsalted butter
3 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
1 lb fresh baby spinach
1 cup heavy cream
1/4 tsp grated nutmeg
Grated pecorino or parmesan, for serving

Instructions

Add the ricotta to a large bowl; season well with salt and pepper and set aside.

Bring a large pot of well-salted water to a boil. Add pasta and cook according to package instructions until al dente. Reserve 1 cup of pasta cooking water and drain.

Prepare your sauce while the pasta cooks: *If using*, cook the pine nuts in a deep 12-in skillet over medium heat until toasted, stirring occasionally, 2 to 3 minutes. Transfer to a small bowl.

Wipe skillet clean and melt butter over medium-low heat. Add the garlic and sauté until pale golden, about 2 minutes. Add the spinach, stirring it in by the handful if needed, and cook until wilted, add a few tablespoons of pasta water, if needed.

Add the heavy cream, bring to a simmer over medium heat and cook until sauce begins to thicken, about 2 minutes. Stir in the nutmeg and season with salt and pepper. Add the pasta directly to the skillet and toss until pasta is coated.

Turn off the heat and stir in ricotta. Thin the sauce with pasta water if needed. Adjust seasoning to taste. Top with pine nuts and grated cheese if desired.

Banana Granola with Cinnamon, Nutmeg, and Walnuts

from *New York Times Cooking*, Banana Granola with Cinnamon, Nutmeg, and Walnuts by Jerrelle Guy.



Yields: 2 1/2 cups

Ingredients

1/2 cup (1 large or 2 small) ripe or overripe bananas
1/4 cup dark brown sugar
1/4 cup melted virgin coconut oil
2 tsp lemon juice
1 tsp vanilla extract
1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
1/8 tsp ground nutmeg
1/2 tsp kosher salt
2 cups old-fashioned rolled oats
1/4 cup walnut halves, roughly chopped

Instructions

Heat the oven to 325° and line a sheet pan with parchment paper.

Add the mashed banana to a medium saucepan with brown sugar and coconut oil. Stir to combine. Cover and cook over medium heat for 2 to 3 minutes, or until the pot comes to a sputtering boil (You'll hear popping). Cook for another 60 to 90 seconds, stirring to prevent mixture from burning.

Remove the pan from the heat, allowing sputtering to subside. Stir in lemon juice, vanilla, cinnamon, nutmeg, and salt. Fold in the oats and walnuts until combined.

Spread the mixture out on the prepared sheet pan in an even layer. Using a spatula, press the oats down into a layer that is about 1/2-inch thick. Bake for 25 minutes, rotating halfway through. Remove the sheet pan from the oven and, using a butter knife, break the granola into large, 2 to 2 1/2-inch clusters on the baking sheet.

Spread the clusters evenly around the pan and bake again until the clusters are a deep golden brown, another 15 to 20 minutes, rotating and tossing halfway through to avoid burning.

Remove the pan from the oven and allow to cool for at least 30 minutes. Break into smaller clusters, if desired. Allow to cool for 1 hour.

Store in airtight container at room temperature for one month.