

CALLING ALL FOODIES!

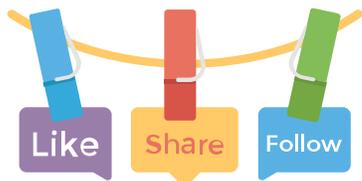
The “Spice of the Month” club is a monthly take-and-make kit featuring a variety of unique spices, herbs, or blends. Each kit will include information about the featured spice, its history with fun facts, and a small packet of the spice with two recipe suggestions!

Once you’ve created your culinary masterpiece, we’d love to see! Share your pictures and tips with us on our Facebook (SEARLibrary) and Instagram (@searlibrary) pages.

Spice of the Month kits are free, but supplies are limited. Only one kit per household.



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SPICE OF THE MONTH CLUB



Star Anise

Star anise is a star-shaped spice native to China and Vietnam. It's derived from the fruit of the Chinese evergreen tree *Illicium verum*. Recognizable by its distinct eight-pointed shape, star anise is commonly used in the kitchen, especially in Asian cuisines. It's often found in the spice blends of five-spice powder and garam masala, which can add a unique depth of flavor to your recipes.

Star anise was originally used as a medicinal herb in traditional Chinese medicine because it was thought to have health benefits. By the 17th century, star anise had made its way to Europe and had become a popular flavoring in baked goods and beverages. Today, it's a staple in kitchens around the world.

Anise flavor is often described as sweet and licorice-like, with subtle hints of clove and cinnamon. Its intense aroma can take a dish from ordinary to extraordinary. When used in the right amounts, star anise adds warm, spicy notes that elevate both sweet and savory recipes.

While star anise and anise seed share a similar licorice-like flavor, they are distinct spices. Anise seed comes from the *Pimpinella anisum* plant, native to the Mediterranean region. It has a milder flavor compared to the bolder taste of star anise.

FUN FACTS

- Star anise contains shikimic acid, a core component of the anti-influenza drug *Oseltamivir*, marketed by Roche Pharmaceuticals under the brand name *Tamiflu*.
- Essential oils of star anise are used in the cosmetic industry for the manufacture of soaps, perfumes, and toothpaste. They are also used in aromatherapy.
- Star anise is a perennial plant, which means that it can survive more than 2 years in the wild.

Source from SoftSchools
https://softschools.com/facts/plants/allspice_facts/1450/

Champurrado (Mexican Hot Chocolate)



Yields: 32 servings
Prep Time: 5 mins
Cook Time: 15 mins

Ingredients

- 1 ½ cups water
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1 whole clove
- 1 star anise
- 4 ¼ cups milk
- 2 tablets Mexican chocolate (such as Chocolate Ibarra)
- ¾ cup pinole (coarse ground maize flour)
- 1 pinch crushed piloncillo (Mexican brown sugar cone), or more to taste

Directions

1. Place water, cinnamon stick, clove, and star anise in a saucepan over medium heat; bring to a boil.
2. Remove from heat and allow spices to steep until water is fragrant, about 10 minutes; strain.
3. Heat milk, chocolate, and pinole in a separate saucepan over medium heat, whisking until chocolate is dissolved and liquid is thickened, about 10 minutes.
4. Remove from heat; add piloncillo and let rest until sugar is dissolved, about 5 minutes more.
5. Pour cinnamon water into the chocolate mixture and stir to combine.

Recipe Source:

<https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/230155/champurrado/>

Acorn Squash Soup



Yields: 4 servings
Prep Time: 15 mins
Cook Time: 60 mins

Ingredients

Roasted Acorn Squash

- 1 large acorn squash, about 21oz
- 1 and 1/2 TBS olive oil
- pinch of salt

Soup

- 2 TBS olive oil
- 1 large leek, white part only, sliced
- 1 large carrot, sliced
- 2 cloves of garlic
- 2 and 1/2 cups, chicken stock
- 2 star anise
- 1 cup lowfat milk
- 3 tsp kosher salt

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
 2. Chop the acorn squash in half and remove the seeds. Brush the olive oil on the squash and sprinkle some salt over it. Bake for 40-45 minutes, or until the flesh is easily pliable with a fork. Let cool.
 3. In a medium pot, heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil over medium-high heat. Add the leeks, carrots, and garlic. Cook for about 3 minutes, stirring frequently so that the vegetables don't burn.
 4. Pour in the chicken stock, add the star anise, and bring everything to boil. Once the stock is boiling, reduce the heat and add the milk and salt. Simmer the soup for another 10 to 15 minutes. Remove the star anise from the soup.
 5. Using a fork, remove the flesh from the acorn squash, and mix it with the other ingredients. Blend the soup with an immersion blender or a regular blender.
 6. Garnish the soup with cayenne, chives, sour cream, or yogurt.
- Enjoy!

Recipe Source:

<https://healthynibblesandbits.com/acorn-squash-soup-with-star-anise/>