

SPICE OF THE MONTH

AT THE CROTON FREE LIBRARY



November's spice is wasabi!

Contrary to popular belief, wasabi is **not** Japanese horseradish!

Although wasabi and horseradish belong to the same family, wasabi is the grated stem or rhizome of the *Wasabia Japonica* — a different plant from *Armoracia rusticana*, which supplies the root that becomes horseradish.

The confusion is understandable, though. Both plants come from the Brassica family, like kale, broccoli, and cabbage, and both have a strong, spicy taste.

The stem of a wasabi plant is pale green. The traditional paste that many of us are used to seeing alongside our sushi looks slightly darker, because it's mixed with water and salt. (You can spot fake wasabi by assessing its color. If it looks very, very bright green — that's horseradish dyed green, not wasabi!)

Authentic wasabi is more expensive to purchase and relatively rare in both Japan and the United States. Most restaurants and retail outlets use horseradish and then add spinach powder to get the green color. Mustard, cornstarch, and other ingredients are sometimes added as well. But the wasabi in our kits this month is the real deal — 100% rhizome from *Wasabia Japonica*.

The recipes in this month's kit call for wasabi in both powdered and paste form. So how do you make wasabi paste out of the powder? Sara Kiyoko Popowa offers a clear explanation in her cookbook, *Bento Power*, available in our collection at the Library:

1 tsp. wasabi powder
1/2 tsp. water
pinch of sea salt



Stir the wasabi powder and water together in a small glass to a paste. Leave the glass upside-down (the paste should be sticking to the "roof" of the glass) to allow the pungency to develop for at least 5 minutes.




Sources - wasabi

All the books listed here are available to check out from the Croton Free Library.

- *Bento Power* by Sara Kiyoko Popowa
- Japanese Food Guide: <https://www.japanesefoodguide.com/what-is-wasabi/>

These recipes are from:

- *Spiced* by America's Test Kitchen
- *The Bon Appetit Cookbook* ed. by Barbara Fairchild
- *The Gaijin Cookbook* by Ivan Orkin and Chris Ying
- *Asian Tapas* by Christophe Megal and Anton Kilayko
- *Gourmet Today* ed. by Ruth Reichl



What did you cook with your wasabi?
Post it on social media with the hashtag
#CrotonSpiceClub and tag us, or send a
photo & description to gglazer@wlsmail.org!

Wasabi purchased from Dualspices.