

SPICE OF THE MONTH



AT THE CROTON FREE LIBRARY

April's spice is Japanese curry!

We're ready to ring in spring, warm weather, and round two of the Curry Quarterly — our 2024 project to learn more about the different spice blends used in a wide variety of stews, braises, and soups all over the globe.

This month's curry is a Japanese blend. Japanese curries tend to be mild, rich, and cozy. And they're very popular: According to the Japanese spice company S&B, which made the curry in this month's kit, Japanese people eat curry an average of 72.6 times per year (and their data comes from a 2015 survey distributed by the All-Japan Curry Manufacturers Association)!

Curry arrived in Japan after Commodore Matthew Perry and his four American ships sailed into Tokyo Bay in 1853 to end Japan's trade isolation. Some of the first Westerners in Japan were Anglo-Indian officers of the royal Navy, according to *The Japan Times*, and they brought the spice blend with them.

A recipe for *kare raisu*, or rice curry — the Japanese adaptation of the Westerners' dish — showed up in a Japanese cookbook less than two decades later. It contained a chopped apple (like the British version) and originally used flour to thicken the sauce. Now, most Japanese cooks use a roux like the French to make a thick paste. The biggest factor in spreading the popularity of curry nationwide was the introduction of "instant" curry mixes, which began in the 1920s.

The S&B curry powder in this kit includes a huge array of spices: turmeric, coriander, fenugreek, cumin, red pepper, black pepper, cinnamon, ginger, star anise, cloves, cardamom, fennel, nutmeg, laurel leaves, allspice, and garlic (in that order).

**Croton
Free
Library**

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

Our sources:

- “Curry — It’s More ‘Japanese’ than You Think” by Makiko Itoh, from *The Japan Times*: japantimes.co.jp/life/2011/08/26/food/curry-its-more-japanese-than-you-think/
- *The Oxford Companion to Food* by Alan Davidson
- S&B Foods Global Site: Japanese Curry Culture: sbfoods-worldwide.com

The recipes in this kit are:

- Chicken Cream Stew, from *The Gaijin Cookbook* by Ivan Orkin and Chris Ying (p. 87)
- Curry Chicken Puffs from *Mooncakes and Milk Bread* by Kristina Cho (p. 112-3)

See our cookbook collection for additional info & recipes, like:

- Curried Sweet Peppers from *The Lazy Gourmet* by Robin Donovan and Juliana Gallin (p.133)
- Curried Tuna with Apples and Golden Raisins from *Flour, Too* by Joanne Chang (p.139)
- Senegalese Peanut Soup from *Splendid Soups* by James Peterson (p. 171)

What did you make with your curry powder?
Post it on social media with the hashtag
#CrotonSpiceClub and tag us, or send a photo &
description to reference@crotonfreelibrary.org!

Curry powder is from S&B.