

SPICE OF THE MONTH

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December's spice is five-spice powder!



If there is a culinary nod to the potential for alchemy in a richly multiethnic world, it might be five-spice powder.

This aptly named blend is indeed a combination of five (sometimes six) spices that are commonly used together in regional cuisines throughout most of China. According to one source cited at the end of this packet, these five spices are rooted in traditional Chinese medicine and based on the five basic elements of life — fire, water, wood, earth, and metal — that correspond to different parts of the body. Combining them is thought to restore balance and cultivate a sense of calm.

Traditionally, the five spices are star anise and sichuan peppercorns (from China); fennel (from Southern Europe); and cloves and cinnamon (from Indonesia). Cassia, a plant from China that's similar to cinnamon, may be used in some blends. Ginger (from Southeast Asia) and cardamom (from Sri Lanka) are also possible additions.

Tangy, pungent, peppery, and rich, this blend is a powerful addition to any dish. Although it's traditionally used to flavor meats, poultry, and fish, it's also delicious with vegetables (we love it on butternut squash!), tofu, or in desserts.

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

Our sources:

- “Chinese five spice: Powder, uses, & ingredients” from Britannica: [britannica.com/topic/Chinese-five-spice-powder](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Chinese-five-spice-powder)
- “Chinese Five Spice” from Feasting at Home: feastingathome.com/chinese-five-spice/
- *The Oxford Companion to Foods* by Alan Davidson

The recipes in this kit are:

- Tea Eggs from *All about Eggs* by Rachel Khong (p. 228)
- Cantonese Chicken Chowder from *The Soupbox Cookbook* by Jamie Taerbaum & Dru Meltone (p. 113)

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

- Five-Spice Red Cabbage Salad from *Brassicas* by Laura B. Russell (p. 64)
- Fragrant Spiced Chicken Wings from *Trader Vic's Tiki Party* by Steve Siegelman (p.143)

**What did you make with your
five-spice powder?**

Post it on social media with the hashtag
#CrotonSpiceClub and tag us, or send a photo &
description to ref@crotonfreelibrary.org!

Five-spice powder purchased from MySpiceSage.