

# SPICE OF THE MONTH



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## February's spice is cinnamon!

Do you prefer cinnamon sticks or ground cinnamon? (Luckily, there's no need to choose.)


To create ground cinnamon, sticks are pulverized into powder. Home cooks can do it with an electric spice grinder or high-speed blender, or by hand with a mortar and pestle or a meat tenderizer. Simply shaving a cinnamon stick with a microplane grater creates fine shavings with a texture like dried citrus peel.

Cinnamon is one of the most popular spices around the world, used in both sweet and savory dishes in a host of different cultures. It's also one of the oldest spices we know, appearing first in literature from ancient China. It showed up in texts from Greek writers Sappho and Herodotus, Sanskrit texts, the Bible, and much more.

Cinnamon is the dried inner bark of a small evergreen tree called *Cinnamomum verum*. Cinnamon sticks are the bark rolled into a tight quill. It's native to Sri Lanka and now grown in tropical regions all over the globe.

A lesser-known spice — cassia — is sometimes mistaken or substituted for cinnamon. The two are quite similar, and much of the spice marketed in the United States as cinnamon is actually cassia! Cassia is sweeter but historically considered "coarser"; it's less expensive and is used as a key element of Chinese five-spice blend. Both kinds of cinnamon in our kits this month are both dyed-in-the-wool "true" cinnamon from Indonesia — not cassia.

Final cinnamon tip: You don't have to cook with cinnamon sticks! You can just simmer them on your stove with whole cloves, star anise, and/or orange peel for a pick-me-up on dreary February days.



## Sources - cinnamon

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

- *Dangerous Tastes: The Story of Spices* by Andrew Dalby
- *The Encyclopedia of Herbs, Spices & Flavorings: A Cook's Compendium* by Elisabeth Lambert Ortiz
- In the Kitchen with Matt: [www.inthekitchenwithmatt.com/how-to-make-ground-cinnamon-from-cinnamon-sticks](http://www.inthekitchenwithmatt.com/how-to-make-ground-cinnamon-from-cinnamon-sticks)

These recipes are from:

- *Arabiyya: Recipes from the Life of an Arab in Diaspora* by Reem Assil
- *Tequila Mockingbird: Cocktails with a Literary Twist* by Tim Federle
- *In Bibi's Kitchen: The Recipes and Stories of Grandmothers from the Eight African Countries that Touch the Indian Ocean* by Hawa Hassan with Julia Turshen
- *Fresh & Easy: What to Cook & How to Cook It* by Jane Hornby
- *Arabesque: A Taste of Morocco, Turkey, and Lebanon* by Claudia Roden

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

**Cinnamon sticks purchased from Penzey's Spices.  
Ground cinnamon produced by FGOrganics.**