

SPICE OF THE MONTH

AT THE CROTON FREE LIBRARY

May's spice is crystallized ginger!

Have you ever heard of "ginger seed"?

Probably not! That's because ginger has been cultivated by humans for so long that it can be only propagated by dividing the root — not from seed, the way the wild plant would have grown originally.

Another clue that ginger is a truly ancient spice lies in its name. It's remained basically unchanged for nearly 6,000 years, when people were migrating from southeastern China across the Malay archipelago. Although no written records exist from that time, historians speculate that ginger spread across the world because it was considered too valuable as a medicinal tool, as well as a spice and an herb, to be left behind.

The root can be eaten straight, grated, pickled, dried and ground, or (last but not least) crystallized and candied with sugar — the preparation in your kit this month.

Crystallized ginger, obviously, is a modern iteration. But it likely goes nearly as far back as refined sugar itself, which acts as a preservative and a sweetener for the spicy root. Dalby cites a family recipe supposedly passed down from an ancient Asian city that explained exactly how ginger should be pricked, soaked, strained, and combined with an equal amount of Bengal sugar to candy it properly.

Many cooks believe crystallizing ginger maintains the juiciness and pure flavor of the root better than any other way of preserving it.



Sources - crystallized ginger

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

These recipes are from:

- *Simply Sensational Cookies* by Nancy Baggett
- *The Urban Picnic* by John Burns and Elisabeth Caton
- *Nadiya Bakes: Over 100 Must-Try Recipes for Breads, Cakes, Biscuits, Pies, and More* by Nadiya Hussain
- *Luscious Coconut Desserts* by Lori Longbottom
- *The Williams-Sonoma Baking Book*

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

Crystallized ginger from Amrita Health Foods.