

SPICE OF THE MONTH

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September's spice is black & white peppercorns!

This month's pick is ubiquitous. Finding a cuisine that does *not* make use of pepper might be impossible.

In ancient Sanskrit, the black peppercorn shares a name with a demon: marica. With their leathery, shriveled appearance and bold taste, it's easy to see the comparison. But black pepper, which is the dried unripe fruit of a tree called *Piper nigrum*, is as ancient and important as it is ubiquitous. It has been used as currency, medicine, and of course food throughout recorded history.

White peppercorns are the same as black peppercorns — identical fruits from the same plant — but harvested when fully ripe and then skinned. White peppercorns have a milder flavor than black.

Both colors begin green, before the fruit ripens and dries. Green peppercorns can be preserved and pickled; they taste like peppery capers.

(Pink and Szechuan peppercorns are misnamed! They're tree berries from a completely different plant: the Brazilian or Peruvian pepper tree, not *Piper nigrum*. When dried, its berries look just like peppercorns too.)

The blend of white and black peppercorns is called mignonette by the French, and it is regarded for adding a visually appealing element to the table, as well as for its service as a condiment.

Both black and white pepper are used to season savory and sweet dishes, as well as drinks and preserved foods. Mix, match, and compare the two in the recipes in this month's kit!

Sources - peppercorns

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

- AllRecipes.com: www.allrecipes.com/article/what-are-peppercorns/
- *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:

- *Autentico* by Rolando Beramendi
- *One Spice, Two Spice* by Floyd Cardoz
- *Chaat: Recipes from the Kitchens, Markets, and Railways of India* by Maneet Chauhan and Jody Eddy
- *Cajun and Creole Cooking with Miss Edie and the Colonel: The Folklore and Art of Louisiana Cooking* by Edie Hand and Col. William G. Paul
- *Nadiya Bakes: Over 100 Must-Try Recipes for Breads, Cakes, Biscuits, Pies, and More* by Nadiya Hussain
- *Eat with Your Hands* by Zakary Pelaccio
- *Banh Mi* by Jacqueline Pham
- *Season: Big Flavors, Beautiful Food* by Nik Sharma
- *Masala & Meatballs: Incredible Indian Dishes with an American Twist* by Asha Shivakumar

What did you cook with your peppercorns?

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

Peppercorns purchased from Penzey's Spices.