

SPICE CLUB: CORIANDER



Botanical Name: Coriandrum Sativum

Origin: A member of the carrot family, coriander is an annual plant native to the Mediterranean region, specifically southern Europe, and the Middle East. It is an ancient spice, with a history dating back more than three thousand years; it is mentioned in the Bible and in Sanskrit texts, and in the Arabian Nights. It was one of the first spice plants grown in North America. Primary producers today include India, the Middle East, Central and South America, the United States, Canada, North Africa, and Russia.

Coriander is the seed of the cilantro plant. When cilantro bolts at the end of its growing season, the plant produces little green berries which are wonderful to eat fresh. Coriander seeds are harvested when mature, but the plants must be cut when the early-morning or late-afternoon dew is still upon them, or the seedpods will split. Then they are dried and threshed to remove the seeds.

Varieties: There are two main types of coriander: Moroccan (kazbarah), which is more common, and Indian (dhanial). The Moroccan seeds are pale tan to medium brown, spherical, and ribbed (looking something like miniature Chinese lanterns); The Indian seeds are more oval in shape and range from a lighter tan to brown.

Description: Unlike those of most herbaceous plants, the seeds of the coriander plant have a very different aroma and taste from the fresh leaves. And while the leaves, often called cilantro, are most popular in Asian and Latin American cooking, the seeds are widely used in many cuisines. The coriander seeds have a warm, nutty fragrance and a sweet, somewhat pungent taste, with citrusy undertones of orange or lemon and faint notes of fresh sage; the Indian seeds are sweeter than the Moroccan. Both types have papery husks but are easy to grind, especially if they are first dry roasted in a skillet. Coriander seeds are always toasted before grinding in India, but if they are to be used in baking and desserts, they should not be toasted. The seeds are best ground in a spice grinder, which will give a finer texture than a mortar and pestle.

Taste and Smell: Flavor chemists have found that the coriander aroma is created by a half-dozen substances, most of which are aldehydes. The essential oil from coriander leaves and seeds contains mixed polyphenols and terpenes, including linalool as the major constituent accounting for the aroma and flavor of coriander. Different people may perceive the taste of coriander leaves differently. Those who enjoy it say it has a refreshing, lemony or lime-like flavor, while those who dislike it have a strong aversion to its pungent taste and smell, characterizing it as soapy or rotten!

Turks use candied, coated coriander seeds at the end of meals to clean the breath like Indians use fennel seeds, one little seed cleans your breath in a second!

Nutrient Profile: Raw coriander leaves are 92% water, 4% carbohydrates, 2% protein, and less than 1% fat. The nutritional profile of coriander seeds is different from that of fresh stems or leaves. In a 100-gram, leaves are particularly rich in vitamin A, vitamin C, and vitamin K, with moderate content of dietary minerals. Although seeds generally have lower vitamin content, they do provide significant amounts of dietary fiber, calcium, selenium, iron, magnesium, and manganese.

Some people are allergic to coriander leaves or seeds, having symptoms like those of other food allergies, that could be minor or life-threatening.

Preparations: Coriander is especially popular in Asian, Indian, African, and Mediterranean cuisines. It seasons curries, stews, and sauces, where it may also act as thickening agent, and is added to chutneys. In India, it is used in drinks, and ground coriander is often dusted over raitas and lassis for garnish. Coriander is an essential ingredient in curry powder. When preparing curries, some coriander seeds could be added to the hot oil to impart their warm, spicy-aromatic, semi-sweet taste to the food. In Southeast Asian homes children are introduced to mild curries featuring coriander instead of cayenne. It is considered an amalgamating spice, meaning it complements a wide range of other spices, and so it is used in many other spice blends as well, including ras el hanout, and in dukkah, the Egyptian spice and nut mix. In Europe and North America, coriander is more often used in baking and for pickling.

Fresh, green coriander seeds could be sprinkled on fish and in fish broths. Dried, ground coriander seed is good over grilled mushrooms, in chicken stews, and with apples in either sweet or savory preparations, and it's even better combined with nuts and cumin, as in the dukkah. Coriander roots have a deeper, more intense flavor than the leaves and are used in a variety of Asian cuisines, especially in Thai dishes such as soups or curry pastes. Whether it's called coriander, cilantro or any other name, this herb is one of the most widely used herbs in a range of different countries and cuisines around the world. Without being specific to one country or type of cooking, coriander adds a special flavor to the recipe.

Combined with oranges, orange zest, rose wine, sugar, and eau de vie, coriander makes a delicious aperitif.

Coriander seeds are used in brewing certain styles of beer, particularly some Belgian wheat beers. The coriander seeds are used with orange peel to add a citrus character.

Coriander seeds are one of the key botanicals used to flavor gin.

Facts: It gets its name from a bug: the name 'coriander' comes from the Greek word koris, which is the word for stink bug. This reference comes from the smell that bruised coriander leaves give off, which is thought to be similar to that of a stink bug!

Coriander is listed as one of the original ingredients in the secret formula for Coca-Cola!

Chickpea Crepes



Ingredients

- 1 ½ cups chickpea flour
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 ½ cup water
- 1 tablespoon ground cumin
- 1 tablespoon ground coriander
- ½ tablespoon ground black pepper
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus about
- 3 tbsps. for cooking and drizzling
- 4 tbsps. grated Parmigiano Reggiano cheese

Directions

- Preheat the oven to 350F.
- In a small mixing bowl, combine the chickpea flour, salt, coriander, cumin, and pepper. Whisk to combine. Slowly whisk in the water and continue whisking until it forms a smooth batter.
- Whisk in the ¼ cup of olive oil and 2 tbsps. of cheese. Let the mixture sit at room temperature for at least 15 minutes.
- Using an 8-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat, heat 1 teaspoon of oil and add a little less than ½ cup of the batter to the pan, swirling the pan so the batter evenly coats the bottom of the pan to the edges. Reduce the heat to medium and cook for 5 to 6 minutes, until the batter crisps around edges and the crepe flips easily. It needs to cook a bit longer than most pancakes or crepes. Make sure the 1st side a little brown, flip and cook the other side for 2-3 minutes.
- Place the crepes in a single layer on a heavy baking sheet, the smoother side facing up.
- Repeat until the batter is gone.
- Sprinkle each crepe with a little of the remaining cheese and drizzle less than a
- teaspoon of olive oil over each. Bake for about 4 minutes until the edges crisp up
- and the cheese melts. Cut each crepe into 4 to 6 wedges and serve immediately
- with more freshly ground pepper.

Marinated Shrimp

Ingredients

Yield: 4 servings

- 1½ pounds shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1 teaspoon grated garlic
- ½ teaspoon paprika
- Pinch of red-pepper flakes
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- ¼ cup lemon jus
- Salt
- 3 tablespoons roughly chopped cilantro to garnish



Directions

In a large bowl, toss together the shrimp, garlic, and the spices until well coated.

Heat the olive oil in a 12-inch skillet over medium heat. Add half the shrimp to the pan in one layer and cook until they just start turning pink, about 1 minute. Flip and cook for about 1 minute more, then remove from the pan and set aside. They may not be fully cooked at this time, and that's O.K. Repeat with remaining shrimp and leave in the pan.

Add the reserved shrimp back to the pan with any juices that have accumulated. Sprinkle the red-pepper flakes, and cook for about 30 seconds, stirring to make sure the garlic doesn't burn. Add the lemon juice to pan and scrape up any brown bits that have formed at the bottom of the pan. Cook until the mixture is reduced by about half, about 1 minute more. Scatter with the cilantro.