Sugar, Spice, and All Things Nice- That's What Tasty Dishes Are Made Of

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**Sugar, Spice and All Things Nice—That's What Tasty Dishes Are Made Of**

by Kay Hoffman

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**Chili Con Carne**

1. can kidney beans
2. can tomato soup
3. pound chopped beef
4. T. shortening
5. 2 chopped onion
6. 1/2 t. salt
7. 1/2 t. pepper
8. 1/2 t. chili powder.

Melt shortening in a frying pan and add onion and beef. Stir until well mixed, cover and cook until onions and beef are browned, stirring frequently.

Add beans, soup and seasoning and cook over a low heat for a half hour. It serves six people.

And paprika—that's the spice that's used as much for color as flavor. The brighter, more brilliant the red, the fresher and moister the paprika. The punch comes from the ground seeds which are sometimes mixed a little with the ground pods. Paprika is like lipstick—it gives a dash and an accent—not a modern cupboard would be without it.

Cinnamon is the spice that has years and years of history behind every pinch. The Chinese knew it 2700 B.C. The Greeks and Romans used it in their religious ceremonies. Wars were fought over it, merchants schemed to control the cinnamon trade. The Venetians, the Portuguese, the Dutch, and finally the British, each in turn forcibly poked their noses into it.

It comes from the bark of an evergreen tree with a beautiful scarlet foliage which changes to a dark glossy green. The shoots, which have been cut off, are tied together and slit longitudinally. They go through quite a process, ferment for a while, are peeled and finally curled up into pipes or quills for shipping. The thiner the shoots and the nearer they come from the middle of the tree, the better the cinnamon and the more delicious the flavor of the apple duplexes as they come brown-sprinkled from the oven.

Cloves give away very little about themselves as they are stuck into the roasting ham or pickles, but they are the unexpanded flower of one of the most beautiful trees in the world. But the tree is a funny one, particular where it grows and easily broken and damaged by tropical storms. The flowers are first a delicate pink, then yellow and dark green and end up red as they are harvested and black as we know them.

Ginger is a perennial like the iris with a bulb shaped like the palm of the human hand. It is planted like potatoes, but—hungry vegetable—it soon impoverishes the soil it grows on. It gets a peeling for eight days, broken up and finally pulverized. Look for it in a rich cream colored yellow, and when it comes that way here's an apple chutney to try:

**Apple Chutney**

12 sour apples
3 peppers (1 red)
1 c. chopped and seeded raisins
1 pt. apple vinegar
3/4 c. currant jelly
2 c. sugar
Juice of 4 lemons
1 T. ginger
1/2 T. onion salt.
1/4 c. cayenne

Chop apples and peppers very fine. Add vinegar and jelly and let simmer the hour, stirring often. Add other ingredients and cook another hour, stirring constantly. This may be stored as canned fruit.

Allspice is a masquerader. Behind that name is really the berry of the pimento tree, dried on a cement floor in the sunlight for eight days. It got its name from the blended cinnamon, nutmeg and cloves flavor.

Nutmeg is the seed of the fruit of a tree and it starts out like a damson plum, changes its mind and follows the apricot line, then the pear and finally becomes dry and leathery and bursts—revealing a scarlet membrane around the nutmeg kernel in a thin brown shell. And there we have them, nutmeg and mace which grow as close together as possible. Here's something new to do with nutmeg—make a peanut butter loaf:

**Peanut Butter Loaf**

1 c. peanut butter
1 c. mashed potatoes
1 egg
2 T. chopped parsley
2 T. salt
2 t. grated onion
1/2 t. nutmeg
1/4 t. paprika.

To the hot mashed potatoes, add peanut butter, beaten egg, parsley, onion, nutmeg, salt and paprika; mix well; turn into a baking pan brushed with butter, and bake in a hot oven 35 to 40 minutes.

Then there's mustard and sage, the parsnip caraway and dill inevitable in pickles. We know these, but quite a group of spices are almost strangers, trotted out only under the command of the master of some famous recipe. They include savory, which resembles

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Tasty Dishes

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mint and is used to flavor beans; thyme, a leaf and also a flavorer of stews and soups; turmeric, a relative of ginger which gets put into curry powder; coriander, the old-fashioned dried ripe fruit used in old meat and pudding recipes. Then there are anise and fennel, which, according to an old saying, is to the fish as mint is to the lamb.

Compounds balanced like budgets have been fixed up—pudding spice, a mixture of nutmeg, mace, allspice, cinnamon, ginger and cloves; pickling spices and poultry seasoning; curry powder, most potent of all spicy compounds, usually made from a rare old recipe including turmeric, black pepper, cayenne pepper, nutmeg, ginger, cloves, cinnamon, allspice, cardamon seeds and coriander seeds.

The two “old salts” of the spice family are celery salt, the ground seeds of the celery plant, and onion salt, made from fresh garden onions.

Before we leave spices we must have at least one trick recipe to try. Here it is:

**Mock Veal Loaf**

1 c. lima beans
1 c. chopped roasted peanuts
1 c. bread crumbs
1 t. salt
3 T. lemon juice
1 t. poultry seasoning
1/2 t. maple flavoring
Milk to mix loaf

Soak beans and cook until soft. Put through sieve, then proceed in the usual manner for mixing. Bake 40 to 60 minutes.

And while slowly savouring each bite of the veal that belies its origin there’ll be plenty of time to ponder on the romance and history of spices and the strange substances from which they come.

Coffee Hour

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Use pears that have been canned whole, the larger the better. Place them with their sirup in a saucepan, adding enough water to cover them generously and half a cup of sugar for every added cup of water. Then add enough commercially prepared red colored, strawberry flavored liquid to make the sirup a rather deep red, and to give it a decided strawberry flavor—about 3 tablespoons of it to a quart of sirup.

Bring the sirup to a boil, then simmer gently for 5 or 10 minutes. Transfer the pears and sirup to a bowl, cover and let them stand in the refrigerator for several hours, over night if possible.

At serving time, soften cream cheese with a little coffee cream, then put it through a rather fine pastry tube and make several flutings up the side of the pear already placed upon the serving plate. This dessert is impressive in its simplicity.

For Washington’s Birthday, cherry cobbler, cherry pie, or Martha Washington pie would be very good for dessert with coffee.

Although not classed with desserts, the infinite selection of cheese and crackers is not to be overlooked. Cream cheese with crackers and preserves may be made unusual by molding the cheese mixed with enough heavy cream to make it smooth. Its delectability may be heightened by placing it in a fancy gelatine mold and surrounding it with crackers in several shapes and flavors. Your own pet conserve, marmalade, or one of the more unusual jams on the market adds the final touch.

Mary Wood, ’35, is employed in Audubon and Guthrie Counties as home demonstration agent.

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