

SPICE CLUB

DECEMBER

SPICE INFORMATION



Star anise (from the *Illicium verum* tree) is a medium-sized evergreen tree native to South China and northeast Vietnam. It's sometimes referred to as Chinese star anise and is picked before the green fruit fully ripens. The fruit is then dried which allows them to harden. Its star shaped pericarps harvested just before ripening are the spice that closely resembles anise in flavor. It is primarily produced in China, followed by Vietnam and other Southeast Asian countries. Star anise oil is highly fragrant, used in cooking, perfumery, soaps, toothpastes, mouthwashes, and skin creams. The fruit of the tree is capsule-like, star shaped, and reddish-brown in color. It consists of six to eight follicles arranged in a whorl.

Star anise contains anethole, the same compound that gives anise, an unrelated plant, its flavor. Star anise has is often used as a less expensive substitute for anise in baking.

It is used as a spice in preparation of biryani (a mixed rice dish originating in South Asia) and masala chai. It is widely used in Chinese cuisine, and in Malay and Indonesian cuisines. It is widely grown for commercial use in China, India, and most other countries in Asia. Star anise is an ingredient of the traditional five-spice powder of Chinese cooking. It is also a major ingredient in the making of pho, a Vietnamese noodle soup.

It is also used in the French recipe of mulled wine. If allowed to steep in coffee, it deepens and enriches the flavor. The pods can be used in this manner multiple times by the potful or cup, as the ease of extraction of the taste components increases with the permeation of hot water.

The recognizable licorice taste comes from the same oil found in anise seed. Star anise can take on different flavor profiles depending on how it is used. It can brighten up a dish or drink, sauces, and desserts. The aromatic profile of star anise adds a mild warmth to mulled drinks like cider and wines. When used in moderation, star anise can deepen the layers of flavor in a hearty meat recipe or stew.

RECIPES

Cranberry Ginger Ale Punch



<https://www.majhofftakesawife.com/quick-5-minute-cranberry-ginger-ale-punch/#recipe>

INGREDIENTS

64 ounces cranberry cocktail
48 ounces ginger ale
1 orange thinly sliced
5 star anise
1 cinnamon stick

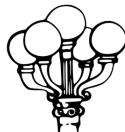
INGREDIENTS FOR GARNISH (OPTIONAL)

Fresh cranberries
Orange slices
Star anise
Cinnamon sticks



DIRECTIONS

1. If you are making the full recipe you will need a one gallon pitcher or other container. If you are doubling the recipe, it is easier to make each batch one at a time.
2. Pour the ginger ale in very slowly. It will bubble and fizz. Try to do it slowly and to minimize this. Part of the fun of the punch is the bubbles!
3. Next, pour the cranberry juice into the container. Once settled, stir very very gently to distribute.
4. To make the Christmas punch flavor from spices, add in the slices of one orange, 5 star anise and 1 or 2 cinnamon sticks. If you are in a bind and don't have these, but you have mulling spices, a tablespoon or 2 of that will work as well.
5. Refrigerate until ready to serve. Pour very gently into punch bowl or cracker jar.



THANK YOU!

Thank you for participating in Spice Club 2025. Looking for other programs? Check out our Winter BINGO Reading Challenge.

Ginger-Apple Pumpkin Soup



<https://tastykitchen.com/recipes/canning/homemade-pumpkin-butter/>

Ingredients

- 1-½ cups Fresh Or 1 (29-ounce) Can Pumpkin Purée
- 2 teaspoons Ground Cinnamon
- ½ teaspoons Ground Cloves
- ½ teaspoons Ground Nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon Ground Ginger
- ½ cups Real Maple Syrup
- 1 whole Star Anise (optional)

DIRECTIONS

1. Place all of the ingredients in a medium saucepan and bring to boil over medium heat, stirring frequently.
2. Once you reach a boil, reduce the heat to low and, stirring often, simmer until thickened and glossy, about 10 minutes.
3. Cool to room temperature.
4. Transfer to sterilized jars or airtight containers. Can according to standard canning guidelines; or refrigerate. Once opened, keep refrigerated.

Homemade Chai Mix



<https://tastykitchen.com/recipes/drinks/homemade-chai-mix/>

INGREDIENTS

- 5 Tablespoons Cardamom Pods
- 2 Tablespoons Whole Cloves
- 1 Tablespoon Coriander Seeds
- 8 sticks Cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoons Black Peppercorns
- 2 whole Star Anise
- 1 teaspoon Ground Ginger



Instructions continued on next page.

DIRECTIONS

1. Combine all of the ingredients except the ginger in a bowl and crush coarsely in a mortar in manageable batches. If you don't have a mortar, use a rolling pin, or even easier, pulse briefly in a coffee grinder. Just don't overdo it—you want pieces, not powder.
2. Stir in the ground ginger and store in an airtight jar.
3. For one cup of chai: combine 1/2 cup milk, 1 teaspoon chai mix, and 1 teaspoon brown sugar in a Pyrex measuring cup and warm in the microwave for about 30 seconds, until hot.
4. Let steep for 5 to 10 minutes while you brew the tea. Fill a mug halfway with the tea, and strain the infused milk into the cup. Adjust the amounts of milk and sugar to your preference. Can also be served over ice.

Slow-Cooked Pear Butter



<https://www.tasteofhome.com/recipes/slow-cooker-pear-butter/#RecipeCard>

INGREDIENTS

- 1 Cinnamon Stick (3 inches)
- 4-5 star anise points (about 1/2 whole)
- 5 pounds pears, peeled and chopped (about 12 cups)
- 1 cup packed light brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon grated lemon zest



DIRECTIONS

1. Place spices on a double thickness of cheesecloth. Gather corners of cloth to enclose spices; tie securely with string. In a 5- or 6-qt. slow cooker, toss remaining ingredients. Add spice bag, covering with pears.
2. Cook, covered on low 5-6 hours or until pears are tender. Remove spice bag.
3. Puree pear mixture using an immersion blender. Or, cool slightly and puree mixture in a blender in batches; return to slow cooker.
4. Cook, uncovered, on high 1-2 hours or until mixture is thickened to desired consistency, stirring occasionally. Store cooled pear butter in an airtight container in the refrigerator up to 1 week.

Carrot and Leek Soup



<https://ohmydish.com/recipe/carrot-and-leek-soup>

INGREDIENTS

About 750 grams carrots

1 large leek

1 large onion

3 garlic cloves

about 1.25 inches of ginger root

1 star anise

50 oz. vegetable stock

large handful of chickpeas

1 teaspoon ground cumin seeds

2 tablespoons tamarind or use lime juice (half a lime)

2 roasted red peppers

olive oil

pepper and salt to taste



DIRECTIONS

1. Peel and rinse the carrots and remove the ends. Then cut the carrots into pieces. Rinse the leek and cut both the white and green parts into pieces.
2. Peel and coarsely chop the onion and garlic cloves. Peel the ginger root and finely chop or grate it. Chop the roasted peppers and set them aside.
3. Preheat the oven to 390 degrees Fahrenheit.
4. Mix drained chickpeas with a dash of olive oil and a teaspoon of ground cumin seeds and spread these on a baking tray without parchment paper. Roast the chickpeas in the oven, they should be crispy in about 20 minutes.
5. Meanwhile, heat a bit of olive oil in a large pan. Sauté the onion, garlic and ginger for a few minutes and then add the carrots and leek for a few more minutes.
6. Pour in the vegetable stock along with the star anise and bring to the boil. Once the soup is boiling, turn the heat down and let it simmer until the carrot has softened.

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DIRECTIONS CONT.

7. Remove the star anise and blend the soup until smooth, you can use a blender or immersion blender.
8. Season the soup with tamarind or lime juice, pepper and salt and serve with the pieces of roasted bell pepper and crispy chickpeas. Enjoy!

Roasted Tomato & Chickpea Curry



<https://www.charlottepuckette.com/recipes/vegetarian/roasted-tomato-chickpea-curry-with-coconut-star-anise/>

INGREDIENTS

2 lbs. medium-sized, vine ripened tomatoes

1/3 cup olive (plus more for tomatoes)

Salt

6 cardamom pods, crushed for seeds

1/2 tsp. fennel seeds

1/2 tsp black mustard seeds

6 cloves

2 star anise

1 small dried red chili or 1/2 tsp. chili powder

1 tsp. ground cumin

1 tsp. ground coriander

1/2 tsp. turmeric

1 tsp. freshly ground black pepper

1 large onion, peeled and cut into quarters

3 cloves garlic, peeled, sliced in half, germ removed

1 Tbsp. grated fresh ginger

1 cup coconut milk (full fat)

14 oz. can chickpeas, rinsed and drained

Chopped cilantro



DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Arrange tomatoes in a roasting tin and drizzle with a little olive oil and sprinkle with salt.

Cont. on next page.

DIRECTIONS CONT.

3. Place in the oven and roast 10-15 minutes or until they start to blister and split. Set aside a few of the nicest ones and reserve the others along with any juice.
4. Heat a dry skillet over medium heat. Add the cardamom seeds, fennel, black mustard seeds, cloves and star anise. Place a lid over the top and cook, shaking the pan, until mustard seeds start to pop, and the spices begin to smell fragrant. Tip into a mortar or spice grinder, add the dried chili (if using) and grind everything to a fine powder. Combined with the ground cumin, ground coriander, turmeric and black pepper.
5. Chop the onion into quarters, slice the garlic in half and remove the germ, place both in the bowl of a mini food processor and pulse until finely chopped, almost to the point of purée. (If you don't have a food processor, grate the onion and garlic by hand using a box grater.)
6. Heat the oil in a casserole or heavy-based saucepan. Add the finely chopped onion and garlic, ginger and a pinch of salt. Sauté over low heat, around 10 minutes, or until the mixture is soft and translucent. Add the spices and continue cooking 2 to 3 minutes, stirring to fully coat the onion mixture.
7. Add the rest of the tomatoes and any roasting juices along with the coconut milk. Stir to combine. Heat to just below the boiling point, then lower the heat and simmer gently for around 15 minutes. Keep an eye on things, stirring now and then, the spices and the coconut milk can cause the ingredients to stick to the bottom of the pan.
8. Add the chickpeas and continue cooking, at a simmer for another 10 minutes.
9. Add the reserved tomatoes and continue cooking at a simmer just till they are heated through, you don't want them to fall apart. Serve sprinkled with plenty of chopped, fresh coriander and serve with rice and plenty of yogurt.

Recipes continue on the following page.

Vegan Pho



<https://www.delish.com/cocking/recipe-ideas/a42398531/vegan-pho-recipe/>

INGREDIENTS: BROTH

1 large yellow onion, peeled, halved
4 dried shiitakes (about 1/2 c.)
1 large piece of ginger (about 5 oz.), halved lengthwise
2 Tbsp. vegetable oil
4 cardamom pods
3 star anise pods
2 (3") cinnamon sticks
8 whole cloves
8 cups
low-sodium vegetable stock
1 Tbsp. white miso paste or dark miso
2 tsp. soy sauce or tamari
1 Tbsp.
palm sugar, rock sugar, or granulated sugar



INGREDIENTS: ASSEMBLY

1 lb. banh pho noodles or dry rice noodles
1 lb. fresh shiitake mushrooms (4 loosely packed c.)
2 heads of baby bok choy, halved lengthwise
Kosher salt
1/2 bunch cilantro, roughly chopped
1/2 bunch Thai basil leaves (about 2 loosely packed c.)
1/4 white onion, thinly sliced
1/2 cup thinly sliced scallion greens
1 (14-oz.) block soft tofu, cut into 1/2" cubes
4 oz. bean sprouts
1 jalapeño, thinly sliced
Lime wedges, soy sauce or tamari, and vegan sriracha, for serving

Directions cont. on next page.

DIRECTIONS

1. In a large pot, combine onion, shittakes, ginger, oil, cardamom, star anise, cinnamon, and cloves. Cook over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally, until onions are charred and spices are fragrant, 4 to 5 minutes.
2. Add stock, miso, soy sauce, and palm sugar. Cover, increase heat to high, and bring to a boil. Cook until slightly reduced, about 4 minutes. Reduce heat to low, cover, and simmer, stirring occasionally, until onion is translucent, 18 to 20 minutes.
3. In a large pot of boiling water, cook pho according to package directions. Drain and divide among large bowls.
4. When broth is ready, strain to remove solids and return to pot. Add mushrooms and cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until tender, 2 to 3 minutes. Add bok choy and cook, stirring, until stems are tender, 1 to 2 minutes. Remove from heat; season with salt.
5. Top noodles with broth, mushrooms, bok choy, tofu, cilantro, basil, onion, scallions, bean sprouts, and jalapeño. Serve with lime wedges, soy sauce, and vegan sriracha alongside.

Slow Cooker Spiced Poached Pears



<https://www.tasteofhome.com/recipes/slow-cooker-spiced-poached-pears/#RecipeCard>

INGREDIENTS

- 1 ½ cups dry red wine or cranberry juice
- ⅓ cup packed brown sugar
- 2 Tablespoons dried cherries
- 1 Tablespoon ground cinnamon
- 1 whole star anise
- 1 dried Sichuan peppercorn, optional
- 4 ripe Bosc pears



GANACHE

- 6 ounces bittersweet chocolate, chopped
- ¼ cup heavy whipping cream

TOPPINGS

- 2 tablespoons pine nuts
- Fresh blackberries
- Sweetened whipped cream, optional

DIRECTIONS

1. In a 3-qt. slow cooker, mix wine, brown sugar, cherries, cinnamon, star anise and, if desired, peppercorn until blended. Peel and cut pears lengthwise in half. Remove cores, leaving a small well in the center of each. Arrange pears in wine mixture.
2. Cook, covered, on low 4-5 hours or until pears are almost tender. Discard star anise and peppercorn.
3. Place chocolate in a small bowl. In a small saucepan, bring cream just to a boil. Pour over chocolate; stir with a whisk until smooth.
4. To serve, remove pears to dessert dishes; drizzle with some of the poaching liquid. Spoon ganache into wells of pears. Top with pine nuts and blackberries. If desired, serve with whipped cream.

Baked Salmon in a Foil Packet



<https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/262812/baked-salmon-in-a-foil-packet/>



INGREDIENTS

- Olive Oil
- 2 medium onions, halved and sliced
- 1 teaspoon dried marjoram
- salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- 2 lemons, sliced
- 5 pods whole star anise pods
- 1/3 cup water
- aluminum foil
- 1 (1 1/2 pound) salmon fillet

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F (190 degrees C).
2. Heat olive oil in a skillet over medium heat and cook onions until soft and browned, about 10 minutes. Season with marjoram and a little salt. Remove from heat.
3. Place lemon slices in a single layer in a clean skillet over high heat and cook until lightly browned on both sides, about 3 minutes. Add star anise and water and bring to a boil. Remove from heat.

Cont. on next page

DIRECTIONS CONT.

4. Cover a baking pan large enough to hold the salmon with sheets of aluminum foil, leaving an overhang on all sides. Lay onions in a single layer on the bottom; place salmon fillet on top, skin-side down. Rub fillet with salt and pepper. Cover with lemon slices and star anise. Fold up the edges of the foil over the salmon to create a packet, making sure to seal the edges well.
5. Bake in the preheated oven until salmon flakes easily with a fork, 35 to 40 minutes. Remove from oven, open foil carefully, and serve.

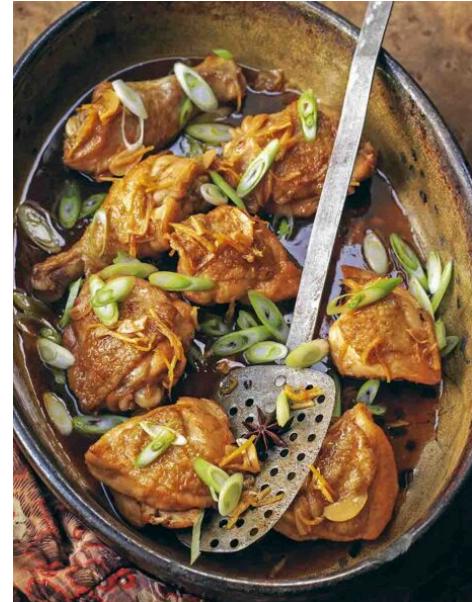
Star Anise and Ginger Braised Chicken



<https://leitesculinaria.com/70292/recipes-ginger-chicken.html#wprm-recipe-container-382162>

INGREDIENTS

1 tablespoon vegetable oil
2 pounds bone-in, skin-on chicken pieces
(or 1 ½ pounds boneless chicken breasts)
sea salt
1 inch piece ginger, peeled and cut into strips
3 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
½ cup Chinese rice wine
½ cup homemade chicken stock (or low-sodium canned chicken broth or water)
1 tablespoon runny honey
1 star anise
¼ cup light or low-sodium soy sauce
(highly recommended to use low-sodium)
3 to 4 tablespoons fresh clementine or orange juice
2 scallions (white and green parts), thinly sliced



DIRECTIONS

1. Heat the oil in a large saucepan. If desired, remove the skin from the chicken. Place the chicken in the pan, skin-side down, being careful not to crowd the pieces. (You may need to work in batches.) Cook until browned, about 4 minutes per side. Transfer to a plate and season lightly with salt.

Cont. on next page.

DIRECTIONS CONT.

2. Pour off all but 1 tablespoon of oil from the pan. Add the ginger, garlic, rice wine, stock or water, honey, star anise, and soy sauce to the pan and bring to a boil. Add the clementine juice and the chicken, reduce the heat to medium-low, cover, and simmer very gently for 15 minutes.
3. Then turn the chicken pieces and continue to simmer gently until cooked through, about 5 minutes more, depending on the size of the chicken pieces. Use a slotted spoon to transfer the chicken to a plate.
4. Skim any fat from the surface of the sauce. Take a sip of the sauce and adjust the seasoning, if necessary. Return the liquid to a simmer and reduce slightly, 2 to 3 minutes. (Be mindful that reducing it too much could cause the sauce to seem quite salty.)
5. Remove and discard the star anise. Return the chicken to the pan and turn to coat it in the sauce. Sprinkle with the scallions.

Acorn Squash Soup with Star Anise



<https://healthynibblesandbits.com/acorn-squash-soup-with-star-anise/>

INGREDIENTS: SQUASH

- 1 large acorn squash (about 21 oz/600g)
- 1 ½ Tablespoon olive oil
- pinch of salt

INGREDIENTS: SOUP

- 2 Tablespoons olive oil
- 1 large leek, white part only, sliced
- 1 large carrot, sliced
- 2 gloves of garlic
- 2 ½ cups chicken stock (600 ml)
- 4 star anise
- 1 cup low fat milk
- salt to taste



OPTIONAL TOPPINGS

- cayenne
- chives
- sour cream or yogurt

Cont. on next page

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees F (190 degrees C). Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Chop the acorn squash in half and remove the seeds. Brush the olive oil on the squash and sprinkle some salt over it. Bake for 40-45 minutes, or until the flesh is easily pliable with a fork. Let the acorn squash cool while you prepare the rest of the soup.
3. In a medium pot, heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil over medium-high heat. When the pot is heated, add the leeks, carrots, and garlic. We want to sweat out the flavors of these vegetables, so let it cook for about 3 minutes, stirring frequently so that the vegetables don't burn.
4. Pour in the chicken stock, add the star anise, and bring everything to boil. Once the stock is boiling, reduce the heat to medium low, and add the milk and salt. Simmer the soup for another 10 to 15 minutes, then turn off the heat. Remove the star anise from the soup.
5. Using a fork, remove the flesh from the acorn squash, and mix it with the other ingredients. Blend the soup with an immersion blender or a regular blender.
6. Garnish the soup with cayenne, chives, sour cream, or yogurt.

Slow-cooker Star Anise Rice Pudding



<https://realfood.tesco.com/recipes/slow-cooker-star-anise-rice-pudding.html>



INGREDIENTS

- 5 cups milk
- 2 whole star anise
- ½ tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 vanilla pod
- 1 cup pudding rice, rinsed
- ½ cup caster sugar
- ½ Tablespoon butter
- ½ tsp grated nutmeg, plus extra to serve
- dark chocolate curls, cut from a 10g piece with a vegetable peeler, to serve

Cont. on next page

DIRECTIONS

1. Pour the milk into a saucepan and add the star anise and cinnamon. Split the vanilla pod, scrape the seeds into the pan, then add the pod too. Heat until just beginning to simmer, then remove from the heat. Set aside to infuse for 15 mins, stirring occasionally. Remove the vanilla pod.
2. Put the infused milk and star anise in a slow cooker* along with the pudding rice, sugar, butter and nutmeg. Stir well. Cook on high for 2-2½ hrs, stirring every hour, until the rice has absorbed most of the liquid and has a creamy texture.
3. Remove the star anise and serve with an extra grating of nutmeg, if you like. Top with the dark chocolate curls.

*No slow cooker? In step 2, simmer the ingredients, apart from the sugar, in a pan for 35 mins, then stir through the sugar and continue with step 3.

Grandma's Christmas Spice Cutouts

<https://www.tasteofhome.com/recipes/grandma-s-christmas-spice-cutouts/#RecipeCard>

INGREDIENTS

2 cups molasses
2 cups dark corn syrup
1/2 cup shortening, melted
2 tablespoons white vinegar
1 tablespoon cold water
10 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon powdered star anise
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
1/8 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg
Dash salt



DIRECTIONS

1. Combine the first 5 ingredients. Whisk together remaining ingredients; add to molasses mixture and mix well. Refrigerate, covered, 3 hours or overnight.
2. Preheat oven to 375°. On a lightly floured surface, roll out dough to 1/8-in. thickness. Cut into desired shapes with floured 2-in. cookie cutters; place 1 in. apart on greased baking sheets. Bake until set, 10-12 minutes. Remove to wire racks to cool.