

CINNAMON

Although there are differences in flavor between true cinnamon and cassia, the recipes below contain no prescriptions regarding variety or grade. Use whatever you have at hand, and the results will be delicious. Or, take the opportunity to experiment with different cinnamons and cassias; each of these dishes is designed to let the spices' unique qualities shine through. (See **THE PANTRY**, page 99, for sources.)

**PICADILLO***(Cuban Pork Hash)*

SERVES 6-8

Serve this hash with warm corn tortillas and stewed black beans.

- 2 **tblsp. canola oil**
- 1 **4" stick cinnamon**
- 1 **large yellow onion, chopped**
- 1 **green bell pepper, stemmed, seeded, and chopped**
- 1 **tblsp. ground cinnamon, halved**
- 1½ **tblsp. dried oregano**
- ⅛ **tblsp. ground cloves**
- 4 **cloves garlic, chopped**
- 2 **lbs. ground pork**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**
- ¾ **cup raisins**
- ¾ **cup green pimiento-stuffed olives, halved**
- 1 **28-oz. can whole peeled tomatoes, undrained, crushed**
- ½ **cup slivered almonds, toasted**
- 1 **tblsp. red wine vinegar**

Heat oil in a 12" cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat. Add cinnamon stick, onions, and peppers; cook, stirring, until vegetables are soft, about 10 minutes. Add half the ground cinnamon, oregano, cloves, and garlic and cook until fragrant, about 2 minutes. Add pork and cook, breaking it up with a wooden spoon, until it browns, 8-10 minutes. Season with salt and pepper; add raisins, olives, and tomatoes. Cook until liquid has evaporated, about 20 minutes. Stir in remainder of ground cinnamon, almonds, and vinegar.

**GLÜHWEIN***(Spiced Wine)*

SERVES 4

Cinnamon is an essential ingredient in this German mulled wine, whose name means glow wine. This recipe is from *The German Cookbook* by Mimi Sheraton (Random House, 1965).

- 1 **750-ml bottle medium-bodied red wine, such as zweigelt**
- ½ **cup sugar**
- 8 **whole cloves**
- 4 **lemon wedges**
- 4 **4" sticks cinnamon**

Bring ingredients to a boil, stirring occasionally, in a 4-qt. saucepan and remove from heat. Discard cloves. Ladle wine into 4 glasses and garnish each with 1 of the cinnamon sticks and 1 lemon wedge. Serve hot.

**CINNAMON HARD CANDIES**

MAKES ABOUT 120 CANDIES

Cinnamon oil or extract gives these confections a tongue-tingling heat.

- 1½ **cups sugar**
- 2 **tblsp. light corn syrup**
- 1 **tblsp. cinnamon extract or ½**

tblsp. cinnamon oil (see page 99)

¼ **tblsp. red food coloring**

1 Line an 8" x 8" metal baking pan with parchment paper and grease parchment with nonstick spray; set aside. Heat sugar, corn syrup, and ½ cup water in a 1-qt. saucepan over high heat. Bring to a boil and cover; boil for 3 minutes. Remove lid and attach a candy thermometer to side of saucepan. Cook, without stirring, until sugar mixture reaches 300°; remove pan from heat. With a long-handled spoon, stir in the cinnamon extract and food coloring. Pour mixture onto prepared pan. Let cool slightly, until candy reaches pliable consistency. Using a pizza cutter or a knife, cut candy into ½" squares. Let cool for 30 minutes, until hard.

2 Peel candies off parchment paper and wrap individually in confectioner's paper (see page 99) or dust candies with a mixture of ¼ cup powdered sugar and 1 tsp. ground cinnamon, if you like, and transfer to a bowl.

**SNICKERDOODLES**

MAKES 48 COOKIES

The ample amount of butter in these soft, chewy cookies draws out and enhances the flavor of the cinnamon.

- 3 **cups flour**
- 2 **tblsp. cream of tartar**
- 1 **tblsp. baking soda**
- ¼ **tblsp. kosher salt**
- 1¾ **cups sugar**
- 16 **tblsp. unsalted butter, at room temperature**
- 5 **tblsp. ground cinnamon**
- 1½ **tblsp. vanilla extract**
- 2 **eggs**

1 In a medium bowl, whisk together

flour, cream of tartar, baking soda, and salt; set aside. Using a handheld mixer on medium speed, beat 1½ cups sugar and the butter together in a medium bowl until pale and fluffy, 2 minutes. Add 2 tsp. cinnamon and the vanilla; beat for 1 minute more. Add eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition. Add reserved dry ingredients; mix on low speed until just combined. Refrigerate dough for 30 minutes.

2 Heat oven to 375°. Combine remaining sugar and cinnamon in a small bowl. Remove dough from refrigerator and, using a 1-tbsp. measure, spoon out 48 portions, rolling each portion into a 1" ball as you go. Roll each ball in cinnamon-sugar mixture to coat. Arrange dough balls 2" apart on 2 parchment paper-lined baking sheets. Bake until golden brown, about 10 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool.

**OPOR AYAM***(Indonesian Chicken Curry)*

SERVES 4-6

In this dish, based on one in *SAVEUR* editor-in-chief James Oseland's *Cradle of Flavor* (W. W. Norton, 2006), cinnamon and lemongrass give the silky sauce fragrance and spiciness.

- 1 **tblsp. coriander seeds**
- ½ **tblsp. crushed red chile flakes**
- 2 **cloves garlic, chopped**
- 1 **medium yellow onion, chopped**
- 1 **4" piece ginger, peeled and thinly sliced**
- 3 **tblsp. peanut oil**
- 5 **fresh or frozen Kaffir lime leaves (see page 99)**
- 4-6 **4" sticks cinnamon**
- 1 **stalk lemongrass, tied into a knot (see page 94)**
- 3 **lbs. chicken thighs and legs**

CINNAMON

- 2 cups coconut milk
- $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp. kosher salt
- 2 cups cooked jasmine rice, for serving

1 Finely grind coriander and chile flakes in a spice grinder. Put spice mixture into a small food processor with garlic, onions, and ginger; purée to a paste. Add 1–2 tbsp. water, if necessary.

2 Heat oil in a 5-qt. Dutch oven over medium-low heat. Add paste; cook, stirring frequently, until fragrant, 5–7 minutes. Add lime leaves, cinnamon, and lemongrass. Cook, stirring occasionally, until cinnamon is fragrant, about 2 minutes. Increase heat to medium, add chicken, and cook, turning once, until golden brown, 8–10 minutes. Stir in 1 cup coconut milk, $\frac{1}{4}$ cups water, and salt. Simmer, stirring occasionally, until chicken is tender, 40–50 minutes. Add remaining coconut milk; cook for 2 minutes. Let cool for 20 minutes before serving with the rice.



BAKED APPLES WITH CARAMEL SAUCE

SERVES 6

This recipe is based on one in Emily Luchetti's *Four-Star Desserts* (Harper Collins, 1996). We found that Fuji apples held their shape the best.

FOR THE BAKED APPLES:

- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup maple syrup
- 4 tbsp. unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 2 tbsp. ground cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. kosher salt
- 6 firm Fuji apples, stemmed and cored
- Ice cream, for serving

FOR THE CARAMEL SAUCE:

- $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup heavy cream
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup raisins
- 2 tbsp. dark rum

1 Make the baked apples: Heat oven to 325°. Combine sugar, syrup, butter, cinnamon, and salt in a bowl; set aside. Cut $\frac{1}{4}$ " from bottom of apples so that they sit flat; transfer apples to a 9" x 13" baking pan. Fill hollow cores with reserved sugar-syrup mixture. Cover apples with foil; bake until tender, about 50 minutes.

2 Meanwhile, make the caramel sauce: Heat sugar and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water in a 2-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Cook, without stirring, until amber colored and a candy thermometer inserted into syrup reads 330°, about 20 minutes. Remove pan from heat; let cool slightly. Add cream (caramel will bubble up slightly). Stir in raisins and rum; set aside. Serve apples with caramel sauce and ice cream.



CINNAMON COFFEE CAKE

SERVES 8

Ground cinnamon gives the topping for this coffee cake its signature zing; the cake itself gets an extra boost of flavor from cinnamon extract.

- 16 tbsp. unsalted butter, melted, plus more for the pan
- $3\frac{3}{4}$ cups flour, plus more for pan
- $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups plus 2 tsp. sugar
- 6 tbsp. plus $1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. packed light brown sugar
- 2 tbsp. plus $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. ground cinnamon
- $1\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. kosher salt
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup finely chopped pecans
- $2\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. baking powder
- 1 cup milk

- 6 tbsp. sour cream
- $2\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. vanilla extract
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. cinnamon extract
- 2 eggs

1 Heat oven to 325°. Grease an 8" x 8" baking pan with a little butter and sprinkle with a little flour; set aside. Make topping: In a bowl, mix 8 tbsp. melted butter, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar, 6 tbsp. brown sugar, 2 tbsp. ground cinnamon, and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. salt until smooth. Add $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups flour; mix with a fork until crumbly; chill. Make filling: In a bowl, mix remaining brown sugar, 2 tsp. sugar, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. ground cinnamon, and pecans; set filling aside.

2 Make cake batter: In another bowl, whisk together remaining flour, sugar, salt, and baking powder; set aside. In a large measuring cup, whisk together remaining butter, milk, sour cream, vanilla, cinnamon extract, and eggs until smooth. Pour wet ingredients over dry ingredients; whisk to combine. Pour half the batter into prepared baking pan. Sprinkle filling over top; pour remaining batter over it. Break up reserved topping with fingers; sprinkle over top; bake until a toothpick inserted into middle of cake comes out clean, about 1 hour 15 minutes. Let cool before serving.



CINNAMON RICE PUDDING

SERVES 8

Either cassia or cinnamon will work in this dessert, but true cinnamon makes a more harmonious match.

- 6 tbsp. raisins
- 1 tbsp. dark rum
- 6 tbsp. short-grain rice
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. kosher salt
- $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups half-and-half
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup packed finely grated

panela or light brown sugar (see page 99)

- 2 4" sticks cinnamon
- 1 egg yolk, lightly beaten
- $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp. vanilla extract
- Ground cinnamon, for garnish

In a bowl, combine raisins and rum; let soak for 30 minutes. Combine rice, salt, and $\frac{3}{4}$ cup water in a 2-qt. heavy-bottomed saucepan over medium-high heat. Bring to a boil; stir; reduce heat to medium-low. Simmer, partially covered, until water is absorbed, 6–8 minutes. Stir in 2 cups half-and-half, panela, and cinnamon sticks and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low; simmer, stirring, until rice is tender, 20–25 minutes. Slowly stir in egg yolk; cook for 1 minute. Remove pan from heat; add raisins with rum, remaining half-and-half, and vanilla; let sit for 10 minutes. Spoon pudding into serving glasses; sprinkle with ground cinnamon.

COOKING WITH CINNAMON

Ground cinnamon has a bolder flavor than whole cinnamon sticks do, and it releases that flavor more quickly. Accordingly, the powdered spice is best suited to quick-cooking foods; it can also be used toward the end of cooking to add zing to a dish. A whole cinnamon stick, on the other hand, is slow to give up its perfume, which tends to come through as a subtle accent rather than a dominant flavor. Cinnamon sticks work well in braised dishes like the Indonesian chicken curry on the facing page and in drinks like spiced wine (also on the facing page), in which ground cinnamon would overpower other flavors. Finally, keep in mind that fat—whether it's butter, cooking oil, or the marbling on a piece of meat—helps activate cinnamon's flavor and also keeps that flavor from dissipating as a dish cooks. That's one reason why cinnamon performs well in butter-rich baked goods. It's also the principle behind the Indian technique called *tarka*: frying spices like whole cinnamon in clarified butter or oil to impart flavor to the fat before cooking with it. —Ben Mims