

Fluvanna County Public Library

Spice of the Month Club

Cumin

Flavor Profile: Earthy, Herby, Warm, Woody

Evidence of cumin in Egypt's pyramids suggests that it was in use more than 5,000 years ago. The Ancient Greeks and Romans used cumin as a table seasoning alongside salt. Roman naturalist Pliny the Elder regarded it as the king of condiments, and in modern-day Georgia and Africa salt combined with cumin is still a popular seasoning. From the 7th century, Arab traders transported cumin on their spice caravans to North Africa and east to Iran, India, Indonesia, and China, and it became a key component of many regional spice mixes, including Baharat (Middle East), garam masala and panch phoran (India), and ras el hanout (Morocco). Spanish Conquistadors introduced cumin to the Americas in the 16th century, notably to Mexico, where the spice became deeply embedded in the cuisine.



Cumin is an essential component of Indian, North African, Levantine, and Mexican cuisine. Used alone or in combination with other spices, it imbues a diverse range of savoury dishes with its distinctive, highly aromatic and pungent flavor.

Regional Cultivation – Thought to be native to Egypt's Nile Valley and the Eastern Mediterranean, cumin is cultivated in India (the largest producer and consumer), China, Syria, Turkey, and Iran. Palestine and USA are other producers.

Regional Star – Cumin is the main condiment spice on the table in Morocco and the base of many spice blends throughout the Middle East and Turkey. In Syria and the countries of the Caucasus, a sauce is made with cumin, pomegranates, and walnuts. Cumin is central to the many kormas and masalas of India, too. Gobi Matar, an Indian dish made with cauliflower, can contain as much as 5 teaspoons. It's added to beans in Mexican cooking with cilantro and to Tex-Mex chili con carne. Cumin is also an essential base for Cajun spice blends.

Healing Power – Cumin's ability to stimulate the secretion of pancreatic enzymes gives it a reputation as a digestive aid. It may also be a liver detoxifier. Two teaspoons of cumin seeds provide almost a fifth of the daily recommended requirement of iron. In Ayurveda, cumin is considered a cooling spice.

Six Main Health Benefits that are currently being researched with positive results include: Weight Loss – Cholesterol – Diabetes – Irritable Bowel Syndrome – Stress – Memory Loss.

Complements – Avocados, beans, bulgur, cabbage, cheese, cilantro, dates, eggplant, eggs, hummus, lamb, lemon, mushrooms, onions, peppers, pomegranate, pretzels, sesame seeds, squash, and walnuts.

Resources at the Fluvanna Library

The Mediterranean Table: Simple Recipes for Healthy Living on the Mediterranean Diet – 641.5918 MED

The Taco Tuesday Cookbook: 52 Tasty Taco Recipes to Make Every Week the Best Ever – by Laura Fuentes – 641.84 FUE

Warm Artichoke Feta Dip

Ingredients

- One 14-ounce can artichoke hearts
- 1 (14 oz.) can or jar of artichokes drained, or 1 frozen package artichokes (thawed and squeezed of extra liquid)
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 2 garlic cloves grated
- 1 cup full-fat Greek yogurt
- ¼ cup tahini
- ½ cup crumbled feta
- ½ tsp. cumin powder (optional)
- ¼ tsp. paprika or cayenne (optional)
- ¼ tsp. black pepper
- 1 tsp. salt
- A handful of chopped parsley for garnish (optional)



Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Combine all ingredients in a large mixing bowl. Mix well. Taste and adjust seasonings as needed.
3. Bake in the oven for 30 minutes or until bubbling and golden brown on top.
4. Remove and garnish with extra olive oil, parsley, and/or paprika.
5. Serve Hot!

<https://raodyrecipes.com/recipes/appetizers/2019/07/18/warm-artichoke-feta-dip/>

Cumin-Lime Avocado Dip (8 servings)

Ingredients

- 2 large avocados
- 1 cup cilantro, loosely packed
- ¼ cup lime juice
- 2 tsp. cumin
- ½ tsp. salt
- 3 cloves garlic

Instructions

1. Pit the avocados and scoop into the bowl of a food processor.
2. Add all other ingredients and puree until smooth.
3. Serve with plantain chips or raw veggies for dipping. Try pork rinds if you're feeling adventurous.

<https://www.paleoscaleo.com/cumin-lime-avocado-dip>



Chicken Fajita Salad with Cumin-Lime Dressing

Ingredients

For the Cumin-Lime Dressing

- ¼ cup grape seed oil or canola oil
- Zest of 1 lime
- 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp. dried oregano
- 1 tsp. salt, or to taste
- 1 tsp. fresh grated ginger (or ½ tsp. ground ginger)
- ½ tsp. ground cumin

Ingredients for the Chicken Fajitas

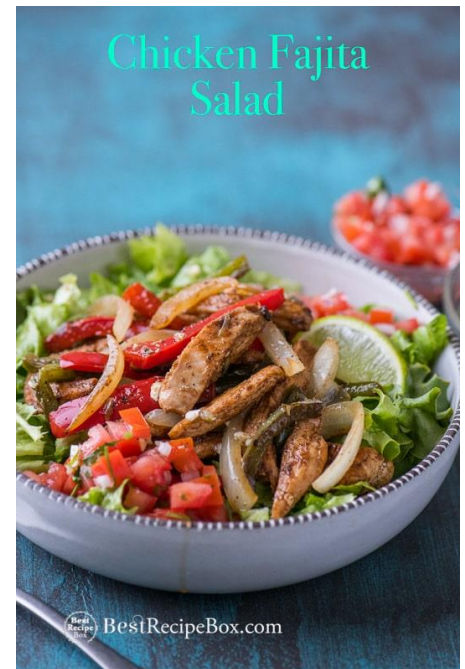
- 1 pound boneless skinless chicken breast (or chicken thighs, sliced into thin strips)
- ¼ cup vegetable oil (or grape seed oil) for marinade
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- ½ tsp. salt, or to taste
- 2 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tsp. chili powder
- ½ tsp. cumin
- ½ tsp. paprika
- ½ tsp. sugar
- 1 tablespoon lime juice (or lemon juice)
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil (grape seed oil) for cooking
- 1 onion, sliced
- 1 large bell pepper, sliced thin
- 1 jalapeno pepper, seeded and minced (optional)

Ingredients for the Salad

- 1-2 heads of lettuce, washed and torn or cut into bite sized pieces
- 1 cup salsa

Instructions

1. Make the Cumin-Lime Dressing. This can be done well in advance. In bowl, combine all dressing ingredients: oil, lime zest, lime juice, garlic, dried oregano, salt and pepper, ginger and ground cumin. Whisk together well, then set aside.
2. Make the Chicken Fajitas. Make marinade for chicken. In large bowl, combine ¼ cup vegetable oil, garlic, salt, Worcestershire sauce, chili powder, cumin, paprika, sugar and lime/lemon juice. Add chicken to the marinade, then cover and chill for about 20 minutes.



3. Cook the Chicken. Heat a large skillet on high heat and add 1 tablespoon of oil. Then add onions – cook onions until almost soft. Then add bell peppers. Sear the peppers and onion until slightly charred. Add the minced jalapenos (optional)
4. Remove pepper and onion mixture to bowl. Put aside.
5. In same pan, add the marinated chicken. DO NOT add the excess marinade juices because it will make the chicken less charred and crispy. But if you want a wetter fajita mixture, you can add the excess marinade.
6. Cook chicken until done, then add pepper/onion mixture back into the skillet with the chicken. Cook for 1 more minute or until onions are hot and the mixture is well combined. Allow the chicken fajitas to cool.
7. For the Salad – When serving, toss fresh lettuce with cumin lime dressing. Add salad to plate and top off with chicken fajitas and fresh tomato salsa.

<https://bestrecipebox.com/chicken-fajita-salad/>

Southwestern Taco Skillet

Ingredients

- 1 tsp. olive oil
- 1 small yellow onion, diced
- 1 lb. ground turkey (or chicken, pork, beef – your choice)
- Salt and ground pepper, to taste
- 1 can (15 oz.) whole kernel sweet corn
- 1 can (14 oz.) diced tomatoes, undrained
- 1 cup instant brown rice
- ½ cup low sodium vegetable broth
- 1-2 tsp. chili powder, or to taste
- ½ tsp. ground cumin
- 1 can (15 oz.) black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 cup shredded Taco-Blend Cheese

Instructions

1. Heat olive oil in a large skillet.
2. Add onions and ground meat and cook over medium heat for 10-12 minutes, or until meat is browned.
3. Remove from heat, drain and transfer meat to a bowl.
4. Return skillet to heat; add corn, tomatoes, brown rice, vegetable broth, chili powder, and cumin.
5. Bring to a boil and reduce heat.
6. Cover and continue to cook for 5 minutes, or until liquid is absorbed and rice is tender.
7. Remove cover, stir in beans and cooked meat and continue to cook for 2 more minutes or until heated through.
8. Remove from heat; sprinkle with cheese, cover and let stand for 2 to 3 minutes until cheese is melted. Serve.

<https://diethood.com/southwestern-taco-skillet/>



Fattoush Bread Salad (Middle Eastern)

Ingredients

Vinaigrette

- 1/3 cup canola or grapeseed oil
- 1 tsp. minced garlic
- ¼ cup freshly squeezed lemon juice
- ½ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- ¾ tsp. cumin seed, toasted and ground
- 1/8 tsp. freshly ground black pepper

Salad

- 3 hearts of romaine, torn roughly by hand (almost 8 cups)
- ¾ cup crumbled feta cheese
- ¾ cup peeled and diced cucumber
- 1/3 cup pitted Kalamata olives
- ¼ cup thinly sliced red onion
- 1/3 cup finely chopped cilantro (parsley can be substituted)
- 1/3 cup finely chopped mint
- 2 pita breads (or buy pita chips)

Instructions

1. To make the pita chips: Trim the edges off the pita breads, keeping a circle shape; split horizontally into two halves. Cut each half into 6 triangles; arrange on a baking sheet. Toast in the oven until golden, dried and crispy, about 12 minutes; let cool. Break the chips into large pieces (or just buy pita chips)
2. To make the vinaigrette: In a small skillet, over low heat, gently warm the canola or grapeseed oil and garlic until fragrant. This is an extra step but well worth it if you have time. In a medium bowl whisk together the oil and garlic mixture, lemon juice, extra virgin olive oil, salt, cumin and pepper. Taste and adjust the seasoning.
3. To serve: In a large bowl, combine the romaine hearts, pita chips, feta, cherry tomatoes, cucumber, olives, red onion, cilantro, mint min ¾ cup of the vinaigrette; toss well, adding more vinaigrette if needed to coat the leaves. Divide the salad among 3 or 6 chilled salad plates. Serve immediately. Serves 6 as a side dish, 3 as a light lunch.

<https://www.sloatgardens.com/recipes/fattoush/>



Fun Facts About Cumin

- cumin makes up a large proportion of curry powder and chili powder.
- In the Middle Ages it was believed that cumin kept chickens and lovers from running away
- It was also said that if cumin was carried during a wedding happiness would follow.
- Cumin was used to pay taxes.
- Cumin is the second most popular spice in the world after black pepper.

<https://www.americanspice.com/blogs/fun-facts-on-cumin/>

Lemon Cumin Chicken Meatballs

Ingredients

For meatballs:

- ¼ cup breadcrumbs (gluten free if desired)
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 pound ground chicken (or turkey)
- ¾ tsp. salt
- 2 tsp. paprika
- ½ tsp. ground cumin
- 1/8 dried red pepper flakes
- 2 tablespoons parsley, chopped
- 2/3 cup onion, minced, sautéed in 2 tablespoons olive oil until translucent. (Reserve half for the sauce).
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons butter

For topping:

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 tsp. paprika
- ¼ tsp. ground cumin
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice

Instructions

1. In a large bowl, add ground chicken, bread crumbs; lemon juice, salt, paprika, cumin, pepper flakes, parsley and half of the sautéed onions. Mix thoroughly. Shape into 1 ½ inch meatballs.
2. In a large skillet, heat oil and butter over medium-high heat. Brown meatballs on all sides, about 5 minutes total. Repeat in batches. Transfer to warm plate, cover and keep warm.
3. For topping: Melt remaining butter in skillet. Add remaining sautéed onions, paprika, and cumin. Cook over medium-heat until warmed through. Stir in lemon juice and spoon over meatballs. Serve.

<https://stlcooks.com/lemon-cumin-chicken-meatballs/>



Moroccan Beet Salad

Ingredients

- 5 medium beets, washed/scrubbed
- ½ cup minced red onion
- ¼ cup finely chopped fresh parsley
- ¼ cup finely chopped fresh cilantro
- 1 ½ tsp. cumin
- 1 ¼ tsp. kosher salt (OR 1 tsp. of table salt)
- ½ tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon olive oil



- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

Instructions

1. Fill a large stock pot (or pressure cooker) with water, enough to cover the beets by at least 2 inches. Bring to a boil and reduce heat to medium-high (water should continue to boil). Allow the beets to cook for approximately 50-60 minutes (or 30 minutes in a pressure cooker). The beets are ready when the skin easily comes off and you can pierce the flesh with a knife or fork with no resistance.
2. Drain the beets. Fill the sink or a large bowl with water and lots of ice; soak the beets for 30 minutes.
3. In a small bowl, combine the red onion, parsley, cilantro, roasted ground cumin, salt, pepper, olive oil and fresh lemon juice; mix well and set aside.
4. When the beets have cooled down, remove the skins (should slide right off), trim the tops/ends and cut into ½ inch (bite-sized) cubes.
5. Combine the beets and the onion/herb mixture in a large bowl and gently stir until the beets are evenly coated.
6. Refrigerate until ready to serve (will hold in the refrigerator for a few days).

<https://www.simplystacie.net/moroccan-beet-salad-recipe/?pp=1>

Citrus Cumin Coleslaw

Ingredients

Vinaigrette

- ¼ cup lime juice
- ¼ cup orange juice
- 1 tsp. ground cumin
- ¼ tsp. kosher salt
- ¼ tsp chili powder
- ½ cup olive oil



Coleslaw (or you can also use a mix and add jalapeno)

- 1 head green cabbage (sliced thin)
- 1 tsp. salt
- 2 cups carrot (shredded)
- 1 large jalapeno (julienned thin)
- 1 cup cilantro (loosely packed, roughly chopped) or parsley

To Make the Vinaigrette

1. Combine all ingredients in blender and process until smooth.

To Prepare Coleslaw

2. Add shredded cabbage to large strainer and toss with salt. Set in sink or over bowl. Allow salt to soften the cabbage a bit as well as release any liquid for about 10 minutes.
3. Add salted cabbage to large bowl and toss with carrot and jalapeno. Add small amounts of dressing and toss well to combine. Continue to add vinaigrette until you've dressed it to your liking.

4. Refrigerate until ready to serve. Just before serving, toss in cilantro (parsley). Add salt and pepper to taste. Serve on sliders, with fish tacos, or as a side dish.

<https://selfproclaimedfoodie.com/citrus-cumin-coleslaw-2/>

Indian Chicken Bits

Ingredients

- 1 – 1 ½ lbs. boneless skinless chicken (or chicken thighs)
- 2 tablespoons light flavored olive oil or coconut oil divided
- 1 tsp. ground black pepper
- 1 tsp. cumin
- 1 tsp. thyme
- 1 tsp. paprika
- ¾ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. garlic powder
- ¼ tsp. turmeric
- ¼ tsp. cayenne



Instructions

1. Dice the chicken into small pieces, approximately ¾ - 1 inch size. Set aside in a medium size bowl. In a small dish or measuring cup, combine all of the spices. Add 1 tablespoon of oil (melted if using coconut oil) and all of the spices to the bowl with the chicken. Toss well to combine. Let rest for at least 10 minutes.
2. Heat 2 tablespoons of oil in a very large skillet over high heat. When the oil is hot, add the chicken. Saute, turning or stirring constantly, until the chicken is browned on the outside and cooked through. This took just a few minutes. Be careful not to overcook the chicken.
3. Remove the chicken pieces from the pan when they are finished cooking. Because the pieces are small, they will dry out if left in the hot pan.

<https://barefeetinthekitchen.com/chicken-bits-made-by-my-man/>

Spice Resources at Fluvanna Library

Books

Essential Spices and Herbs: Discover Them, Understand Them, Enjoy Them by Christina Nichol – 641.6383 NIC

Herbs & Spices: The Cook's Reference by Jill Norman – 641.6383 NOR

Healing Spices Handbook: Recipes for Natural Living by Barbara Brownell Grogan – 615.3 BRO

Herbs & Spices: The Cook's Reference by Jill Norman – 641.6383 NOR

Mastering Spice: Recipes and Techniques to Transform Your Everyday Cooking by Lior Lev Sercarz – 641.6383 SER

The Tex-Mex Table: 60 Knockout Recipes from the Lone Star – by Mandi Hickman – 641.5972 HIC



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