

# A Spice Primer

## From fiery to noble



### Clove

The clove tree is a member of the myrtle family. It is native to the Molucca Islands of Indonesia. The red buds of the clove tree are harvested before they blossom. As they dry, they assume their typical brown color and ultimately resemble little dark nails. And this is also where it gets its name: The word clove stems from the Latin word for nail.

Clove is one of the world's oldest spices. Today's cuisine would be inconceivable without its searing-fiery taste. In addition to being used to flavor baked goods, these tasty little "nails" are also contained in numerous seasoning blends.



### Nutmeg

There's no question about it: It's a noble spice. It probably used to be employed in connection with religious rites. The nutmeg tree, which can live to be up to 100 years old, is native to the Indonesi-

an Moluccas. Nutmeg is obtained from the seedpods of the fruit of this tree, which resemble apricots in size and shape. After maturing for around nine months, they split open to release the nutmeg nuts.

Its fiery, bittersweet taste makes nutmeg a spice that is sometimes more important than salt – such as in cauliflower, kohlrabi, leek, as well as in numerous meat and fish dishes. The unique flavor of nutmeg also lends a special touch to sweets, such as Christmas bakery or apple dishes.



### Cinnamon

Cinnamon conjures up memories of the Christmas season, pine branches and delicious bakery – and it is also sometimes reminiscent of rice pudding, which taste only half as good without the sugar and cinnamon.

The cinnamon tree is a member of the laurel family. Its main representatives are *Cinnamomum ceylanicum* (Sri Lanka) and *Cinnamomum cassia* (southern China). In both trees, the cinnamon is contained in the inner bark, which is peeled from the trunk.

Cinnamon lends a fiery-sweet taste to many foods, and its striking note is also popular in perfumery and soap making. For flavorists, though, it's primarily the cinnamon oil that's important, which is obtained through steam distillation.



### Vanilla

Highly aromatic and savory-sweet – a diva of good taste. Vanilla is considered to be the finest tropical spice, bar none. Although originally primarily native to Mexico, today it is chiefly cultivated in Madagascar and on the island of La Réunion. Vanilla pods are the fruits of a tropical climbing orchid. This plant needs three years before it first bears fruit. Its yellow-green blossoms bloom only once, and only for a few hours. During this period, the blossoms have to be artificially pollinated, as they would otherwise die off. Around six months later, shortly before they mature, the green vanilla pods can be harvested. After being immersed in boiling water, they are then wrapped in cloths and placed in the sun. The subsequent fermentation process is responsible for their brownish-black color, along with the typical taste and aroma of vanillin. Although vanilla is primarily employed in the food industry, this noble spice also plays a major role in pharmaceuticals and as a fragrant ingredient in the cosmetics industry.

