

## Cooking at Bull Brook Keep

### Spice Blends

*There are scores of spice blends featured on countless websites and cookbooks. These are samples adapted from numbers of sources.*

T= tablespoon    tsp=teaspoon    c=cup

#### **Ras el Hanout** (*Morocco*)

Ras el Hanout gives a pungent, warm flavor, while the cinnamon, cloves, and nutmeg also add sweet notes. Use in marinades, as a rub, or as a seasoning in stews and tajines.

Mix Ras el Hanout with softened butter or sour cream to quickly make a topping, or toss it over fresh popcorn.

- 1 tsp ground ginger
- 1 tsp salt
- 3/4 tsp ground black pepper
- 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp ground coriander
- 1/2 tsp cayenne pepper
- 1/2 tsp ground allspice
- 1/4 tsp ground cloves
- 1 tsp ground cumin

Combine all components very well. Store in an airtight container in a cool, dry, dark place.

#### **Hawayil** (*Yemen*) *Makes about 1 cup*

Add hawayil with the onions and celery when making chicken soup; sprinkle on carrots before roasting; rub into steaks before searing.

Store at room temperature for up to one month, or for considerably longer in an airtight container in the refrigerator.

- 1/3 c caraway seeds (a generous one ounce)
- 1/3 c cumin seeds
- 3 T cardamom seeds
- 1 T whole black peppercorns
- 4 whole cloves
- 3 T coarse kosher salt
- 3 T ground turmeric

Heat a heavy skillet over medium-high heat. Mix the first five ingredients and toast them in the dry skillet until the spices are aromatic and the cumin seeds are slightly darker. Be careful not to burn the spices! Cool to slightly warm.

Working in batches, grind in a spice or coffee mill. Place in medium bowl.

Whisk in turmeric. Store in an airtight container at room temperature for up to one month.

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### **Za'atar** (*Israel, the Middle East*) Makes about 1/4 cup

Za'atar is an intensely aromatic and ancient spice blend and condiment used to flavor everything from grilled meats to freshly baked bread. The mixture is traditionally made with dried herbs such as marjoram or thyme (the Arabic word *za'atar*, pronounced *ZAH-tahr*, also means "thyme"), but you can kick this up by using chopped fresh oregano for a vibrant twist. The oregano goes extremely well with the nuttiness of sesame. Use liberally.

Store in airtight jar in refrigerator.

- 1 T chopped fresh oregano, or 1/2 tsp dry leaves
- 1 T sumac
- 1 T ground cumin seed
- 1 T toasted sesame seeds
- 1 tsp kosher salt, or 3/4 tsp fine sea salt
- 1 tsp freshly ground black pepper

Combine all the spices, whisking to mix well. Store in refrigerator in airtight container for up to 3-4 weeks. Can be stored at room temperature for 2 weeks.

### **Garam Masala** (*India*)

There are as many versions of this blend as there are cooks in India. The dominant components vary from region to region. This is a very basic blend.

- 2 tsp cardamom seeds
- 1 1/2 cinnamon sticks (shattered)
- 1/4 c coriander seeds
- 3 T cumin seeds
- 2 T black peppercorns
- 1 T whole cloves
- 1/2 tsp ajowan (optional)

Dry-roast all the spices together in a heavy fry pan over medium heat for about 5-6 minutes. Stir constantly to prevent scorching the spices. (Burnt spices become bitter.)

Let spices cool, then grind to a powder. Sift out any large pieces.

Store in an airtight jar in the freezer for up to 2-3 months.

Some of my favorite spice references:

- Norman, Jill. *Herbs & Spices: the Cook's Reference*. New York: Penguin Random House, 2002.
- Page, Karen, and Dorenburg, Andrew. *The Flavor Bible: The Essential Guide to Culinary Creativity, Based on the Wisdom of America's Most Imaginative Chefs*. New York: Little Brown and Company, 2008.
- Iyer, Raghavan. *660 Curries*. New York: Workman Publishing, 2008.