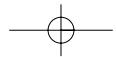
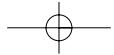


## SPICE BLENDS AND RUBS

Berbere  
Awase  
**Black Olive Oil**  
Chermoula  
Boharat  
Dark Spice Mix  
Duqqa  
**Bahama Spice Farm,  
Tanzania**

Ginger Paste  
Green Curry Paste  
Green Masala  
Harissa  
Jerk Mix  
**Ras al-Hanout**  
Spiced Butter  
Yogurt Rub  
Za'atar



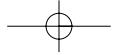


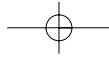
# A

**T FIRST GLANCE, AFRICAN FOOD SEEKS VERY STRAIGHTFORWARD**—meats grilled over an open flame, slow-cooked stews stretched with vegetables and offal, and bland, starchy sides that fill the belly for a full day's work. But my travels throughout the continent put an end to this assumption—as I ate my way through Africa, in country after country I found the cooking to be startlingly flavorful and full of surprises.

You can't begin to think about African cooking without first understanding the importance of spice blends, which are used to elevate simple cooking techniques to an excitingly varied and intensive level. Just as European cooking relies on salt to give dimension to dishes, cooks throughout Africa use spice blends and rubs to season their meats, poultry, fish, and other seafood before and after cooking. With blends that vary from region to region—ranging from sweet to spicy with varying degrees of heat, and featuring everything from hot chili peppers or peppermint leaves to sesame seeds and ginger—it's an exciting and flavor-packed way to eat that awed me at first bite.

From the start, I loved the searing heat of Ethiopian stews, the delicate nuances of Moroccan tagines, the relentlessly spicy peanut stews of West Africa, and the coconut- and spice-infused richness of the Cape Malay cuisine of South Africa. But what surprised me the most was how hauntingly familiar many of the dishes seemed—in them I tasted ginger, cinnamon, saffron, cloves, nutmeg, cumin, curries . . . tastes I associated with Asia and Europe, South America and India. How, I wondered, had Africa come to be the melting pot for all these flavors?

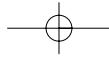


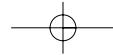


The reason, I learned, is that Africa played a major but little-known role in the spice trade, as invaders, settlers, and travelers crisscrossed the continent for centuries, introducing spices and ingredients from around the world. In Egypt, routes for the trade of eastern spices, oils, and fragrances were established very early on: nearly five thousand years ago, spice markets near Giza provided the builders of Egypt's great pyramids with spices to "improve their strength," and ancient Egyptians used spices for embalming, as perfume, and to fumigate their homes. In the seventh century, Arab invaders settled in northern and eastern Africa, bringing with them spices that were quickly incorporated into the local cooking. Berber traders carried these spices into West Africa, and from there into the interior. Elsewhere in Africa, spices of other lands became an important part of local cooking—Indian settlers on the eastern coast brought their curries, and South Africa's Malay slaves introduced the spices that are so prominent a part of South African cooking today. The result is a continent of cuisines that offer a delicious flavor journey around the globe, with an exceptional balance of layered tastes and flavors that sparkle on the palate. It's fusion cuisine at its most elegant and organic—and most successful—and it all stems from the spice blends developed hundreds of years ago.

In this chapter, I've compiled my favorite blends, representing the best of each region. And don't forget that these blends provide an easy way to introduce the flavors of Africa to your everyday cooking. If you don't have the time or inclination to make one of the recipes from this book but want to add a taste of Africa to your meal, just use the blend of your choice—for instance, rubbing delicately flavored ras al-hanout over a chicken breast or fiery piri piri sauce on a bass fillet next time you fire up the grill.

Because the freshness of spices has such an impact on their intensity, African cooks typically don't measure exact quantities, instead relying on their sense of taste and smell to strike the right balance. I've given measurements, but feel free to modify them, adding a little more of this and a little less of that according to your personal preference. For the most flavorful results, keep in mind that I recommend using whole spices and grinding them by hand in a mortar and pestle. In a pinch, ground spices will work, but you'll lose some of the intensity and flavor.





## BERBERE

**F**or me, Ethiopian cooking is built on three building blocks: injera, the local bread that is served with each meal; nit'ir qibe, a spiced butter that provides a rich base; and berbere, a complex blend of chili peppers and spices that gives the cuisine its signature rich, layered flavors.

In Ethiopia, the preparation of berbere takes days—chilies are dried in the sun for three days, then ground in a mortar and pestle, mixed with ground spices, and set in the sun to dry again—and it is usually made in huge amounts, using as many as fifteen pounds of chilies and five pounds of garlic. I've streamlined the recipe and cut the yield drastically for a simplified preparation that maintains the integrity of flavors but takes only fifteen minutes to make.

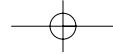
Each Ethiopian family has its own recipe for this universal seasoning, with varying degrees of heat and spiciness. Traditionally, berbere is used to flavor Ethiopian stews, but I also like to use it as a rub for beef and lamb.

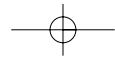
1 teaspoon fenugreek seeds  
 ½ cup ground dried serrano chilies or other ground dried chilies  
 ½ cup paprika  
 2 tablespoons salt  
 2 teaspoons ground ginger  
 2 teaspoons onion powder  
 1 teaspoon ground cardamom, preferably freshly ground  
 1 teaspoon ground nutmeg  
 ½ teaspoon garlic powder  
 ¼ teaspoon ground cloves  
 ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon  
 ¼ teaspoon ground allspice

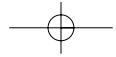
Finely grind the fenugreek seeds with a mortar and pestle or in an electric spice or coffee grinder. Stir together with the remaining ingredients in a small bowl until well combined.

*Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 3 months.*

**MAKES 1 CUP**







## AWASE

**B**erbere, the dried chili-based spice blend, is the cornerstone of almost all Ethiopian dishes. But even berbere can't fuel enough fire for heat-seeking Ethiopian palates. Awase, a blisteringly hot condiment made with berbere, is used as an Ethiopian-style ketchup, served on the side to up the heat quotient of stews and soups. Use it sparingly to add heat to any dish.



**2 tablespoons Berbere (page 12) or mild chili powder**

**1 teaspoon cayenne pepper**

**½ teaspoon ground ginger**

**¼ teaspoon ground cardamom, preferably freshly ground**

**½ teaspoon salt**

**2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice**

**1 tablespoon dry red wine**

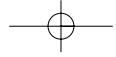
**1 tablespoon water**

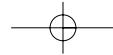
Combine the berbere, cayenne, ginger, cardamom, and salt in a small sauté pan and toast over medium heat, stirring constantly, until fragrant, about 30 seconds.

Remove the pan from the heat. Whisk in the lemon juice, red wine, and water. Let cool.

*Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 1 week.*

**MAKES ABOUT ¼ CUP**





## BLACK OLIVE OIL

**W**hen considering the cooking of the Mediterranean, many people look only to the north and completely overlook the countries that border the southern side of the sea. But in fact, North African cooking—especially in Morocco and Tunisia—shares many similarities with the culinary traditions of Spain, Italy, and Greece, particularly the reliance on olives, which are served at the start of every meal, and olive oils. This black olive oil is inspired by the cooking of North Africa and is great to use as a rub for lamb or fish, or even as a dressing for salad.

**1/2 cup black olives, pitted  
2 anchovy fillets, minced, or 1½ teaspoons anchovy paste  
2 cups extra virgin olive oil  
2 garlic cloves  
2 thyme sprigs, leaves only, chopped**

Combine all the ingredients in a blender and puree until smooth.

*Store tightly covered in the refrigerator for up to 1 week.*

**MAKES 2½ CUPS**

## CHEMROULA

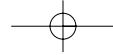
I think chermoula is a perfect representation of the best of North African culinary traditions—it's rich and varied in flavor, with underlying spiciness so you can really taste all the distinct spices. Cooks all over northern Africa use chermoula, particularly in Morocco and Tunisia, where it is typically used as a rub for fish. I like to toss it with chicken or meat when I'm grilling to add a bright and lively note of herbs and citrus with just a hint of heat.

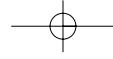
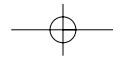
**8 garlic cloves  
1/2 cup small parsley sprigs  
1/3 cup small cilantro sprigs  
Grated zest of 2 lemons  
4 teaspoons paprika  
2 teaspoons chili powder  
2 teaspoons ground cumin  
1 cup olive oil**

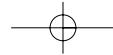
Combine the garlic, parsley, cilantro, lemon zest, paprika, chili powder, and cumin in a blender and blend on low speed to a coarse puree; don't process until smooth. With the blender running, add the oil in a thin, steady stream and blend until a thick paste forms.

*Store in a tightly covered container in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks.*

**MAKES 1½ CUPS**







## BOHARAT

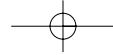
One of the highlights of my job is that I meet people from all around the world, giving me an international experience every day. When I first became interested in African cooking, one of the cooks who works with me shared his family recipe for boharat, an incredibly distinctive and aromatic spice blend that is the cornerstone of many North African and Middle Eastern dishes. To me, this lovely blend showcases the Arabic influences that prevail throughout North Africa—rose petal lends a floral note and lemon powder gives a bright, citrus component, while the remaining spices highlight the variety of flavors that made their way through Morocco's legendary spice trade. Look for rose petals and lemon powder in Middle Eastern markets or specialty spice shops.

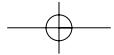
**1/4 cup ground allspice  
1 tablespoon freshly ground black pepper  
1 tablespoon ground cinnamon  
1 tablespoon ground nutmeg  
1 teaspoon ground cardamom, preferably freshly ground  
1 teaspoon ground cloves  
1 teaspoon ground ginger  
1 teaspoon dried rose petals  
1 teaspoon dried lemon powder**

Stir together all the ingredients in a small bowl until well combined.

*Store tightly covered in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks.*

**MAKES  $\frac{1}{2}$  CUP**





## DARK SPICE MIX

was trained in European-style cooking, where salt and pepper balance the flavors of individual dishes. African cooking takes a completely different approach, relying on spice blends to give dishes a sense of equilibrium, much as curries do in Indian cookery. This paste combines spices used all over the continent for beautiful layers of flavor that lend an exotic kick to poultry or meat.

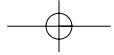
- 1 tablespoon cumin seeds
- 1½ teaspoons poppy seeds
- One 3-inch piece ginger, peeled and grated
- 2 teaspoons mustard seeds
- 2 teaspoons fennel seeds
- 6 cloves
- 1 teaspoon cardamom pods
- 1 teaspoon black peppercorns
- 2 cinnamon sticks, crushed into small pieces
- 2 Scotch bonnet chilies, seeds and ribs removed, chopped
- ½ cup peanut oil

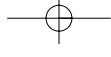
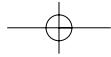
Heat a small sauté pan over low heat. Add the cumin seeds, poppy seeds, ginger, mustard seeds, fennel seeds, cloves, cardamom, peppercorns, cinnamon sticks, and chilies and toast until fragrant, stirring occasionally, about 30 seconds.

Transfer to a blender and puree. With the blender running, add the oil in a thin, steady stream and blend to a coarse puree.

*Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 3 weeks.*

**MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP**





## DUQQA

The word "duqqa" is derived from the Arabic word meaning "to pound," and with good reason, because the nuts and spices are crushed together with a mortar and pestle for a richly textured result. Originally developed in the Middle East, this lovely spice blend has made its way throughout northern Africa. It's especially popular in Egypt, where it is eaten with bread dipped in olive oil at breakfast or as a snack. Recipes for duqqa vary from family to family, with mint as the signature flavor. While you can find prepared duqqa in some Middle Eastern markets, it's so easy to make and the fresh preparation is so superior in flavor and aroma that I recommend only using homemade. Do not try making this in a blender, as the sesame seeds will turn to a paste.

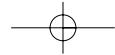
**2 tablespoons hulled pumpkin seeds  
2 tablespoons peanuts  
1 teaspoon black peppercorns  
2 teaspoons sesame seeds  
8 mint leaves  
4 thyme sprigs, leaves only  
1 teaspoon coriander seeds  
1 teaspoon cumin seeds  
1½ teaspoons salt**

Heat a small sauté pan over medium heat. Add the pumpkin seeds, peanuts, and peppercorns and toast, stirring, until fragrant, about 5 minutes. Add the sesame seeds, mint leaves, thyme leaves, coriander, and cumin and toast, stirring frequently, until fragrant, about 5 minutes.

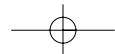
Transfer to a mortar and grind with the pestle, or grind in an electric spice or coffee grinder until the seeds and nuts are coarsely crushed. Add the salt.

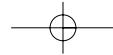
*Store in a tightly covered container in the refrigerator for up to 10 days.*

**MAKES ½ CUP**



I was in Zanzibar, and it felt like being in paradise.





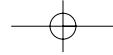
**WAS VISITING THE BAHAMA SPICE FARM**, a small, private farm where the faint, musky smell of cloves and cardamom danced on the breeze. Before me stretched a riotous tangle of greenery, sprouting spices I never imagined I'd have the opportunity to see growing—much less all in one place. As a chef, seeing how the spices I use daily are cultivated was like being in my own personal garden of Eden. It was an awe-inspiring afternoon I will never forget.

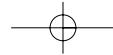
A guide walked me through the farm, challenging me to recognize the different spices that grew before us. Handing me a leaf from a large tree, he urged me to smell it to see if I could recognize the aroma. I sniffed and ventured a guess—"Cinnamon?"—and he smiled, happy to have stumped me. "No, it's nutmeg," he said, cracking open the mottled yellow fruit to reveal the tough brown kernel of nutmeg at its center.

And so it went on our journey along the rambling path that ran through the spice patches. Before me, vanilla beans, ginger, cardamom, cloves, lemongrass, cocoa, cinnamon—all

the magical flavors that inspire me every day—sprang from the ground, seemingly at random: a nutmeg tree here, a vanilla-bean vine there, a cinnamon tree in the distance. We pulled ginger roots and lemongrass stalks from the ground, and watched our guide climb the branches of a tree to pluck a blossom that yielded tender, plump pink cloves, which would later be dried until they were shriveled and brown.

At the end of the tour, one of the boys accompanying us twisted a length of rope into a figure 8, hooked his feet into it, and used it to help him shimmy up the trunk of a tall, graceful coconut tree, disappearing into the sky to send a storm of coconuts raining down on us. Back on the ground, he cracked open a coconut and handed it to me. As I sipped the fresh, warm juice, I remembered hearing that long-ago sailors passing Zanzibar used to claim they could smell the scent of cloves drifting from the island far out to sea. Today, Zanzibari farmers still eke out a living growing spices on small plots of land, but there was a time when spice plantations brought great riches





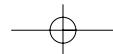
to Zanzibar, a time whose legacy can still be seen in Stone Town, the faded but opulent heart of this vibrant island.

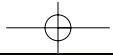
Stone Town is one of the most magical cities I've ever visited. It's a city of surprises—twisting narrow streets that seem to lead to nowhere, grand Arab palaces, Persian baths, mosques, temples, churches, hotels, restaurants, and shops, and sudden glimpses of the Indian Ocean framed between the crumbling stone buildings.

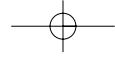
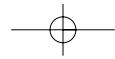
This magical, mysterious town is the place where the African, Arab, and Indian worlds meet. Hundreds of years ago, African fishermen, Arab and Persian traders, and Indian mer-

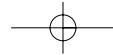
chants all settled on the island. The Portuguese occupied Zanzibar beginning in 1503, but were forced out by the Omani Arabs in the late 1600s. Their defeat was followed by more than two hundred years of rule by Arab sultans.

The sultans transformed Zanzibar, introducing cloves from Madagascar and building the first spice plantations. Thanks to the spice trade, the island quickly grew rich and the newly wealthy townspeople began rebuilding their mud homes with stone. The traditional Islamic modesty of these homes was accented with beautifully carved and studded doors, which are now one of the hallmarks of Stone Town. I was told these







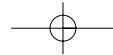


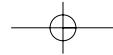
doors served a dual purpose—their ornate carving was a way for wealthy homeowners to show off their riches, while the studs were a symbol of protection for the inhabitants.

But, as in many of the places I visited in Africa, you can't ignore history. All this grandeur has a dark side: at the height of the slave trade, as many as sixty thousand slaves a year were transported from the mainland to Zanzibar and sold to owners in Arabia, India, and French Indian Ocean possessions. I visited one of the prisons where the slaves were held—a cramped, dark, stark contrast to the stunning palaces built by

the sultans who grew rich from the sale of slaves and spices.

During my brief visit, I drank in the sights, smells, and sounds of Zanzibar: fishermen sailing off in elegant dhows as the sun set over the Indian Ocean, the scent of grilled fish wafting from Stone Town's nightly waterfront market at Forodhani Gardens, and the calling of the muezzin—the crier who summons the Muslim faithful to prayer five times a day—from the mosque near our hotel. It's a place of magic and mystique, whose very name conjures up a sense of enchantment and the smell of spices.





## GINGER PASTE



Ginger made its way to Africa through Middle Eastern and Asian traders and is now used throughout the continent both as a flavoring and for medicinal purposes. Use this paste to lend ginger's wonderfully distinctive pungent, peppery flavor to fish, meat, or poultry.

- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tablespoon ground ginger
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- ½ teaspoon chili powder
- ½ teaspoon ground turmeric
- 2 tablespoons coarsely chopped dry-roasted peanuts
- 1 tablespoon peanut oil
- ¼ cup fresh lemon juice
- ½ teaspoon salt
- One 4-inch piece ginger, peeled and grated

Heat a small sauté pan over medium heat. Add the garlic, ground ginger, coriander, chili powder, turmeric, and peanuts and toast, stirring, until fragrant, about 2 minutes.

Transfer to a food processor. Add the oil and lemon juice and process until well combined but not smooth. Add the salt and process to blend. Before using, fold in the grated ginger.

*Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 3 days.*

**MAKES ABOUT ½ CUP**

## GREEN CURRY PASTE

A long the eastern coast of Africa and down into South Africa, it's hard to escape the culinary influences of Indian traders and workers who brought the taste of curry to African shores. You'll find curry blends all along the coast—particularly in Kenya, where curry has become a staple. This version packs a touch of heat, but if you want a spicier curry, don't remove the seeds and ribs from the chilies.

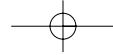
- 10 bird's-eye chilies or 6 habanero chilies, seeds and ribs removed, finely chopped
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 lemongrass stalks, tender inner part only, finely chopped
- Grated zest of 2 limes
- 1 large red onion, chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- ½ teaspoon ground coriander
- ½ teaspoon ground cardamom, preferably freshly ground
- ¼ teaspoon ground cloves

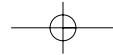
- One 3-inch piece ginger, peeled and grated
- 2 tablespoons peanut oil
- 2 teaspoons salt

Combine all the ingredients in a food processor and puree to a chunky paste.

*Store in a tightly covered container in the refrigerator for up to 1 week.*

**MAKES 1 CUP**





## GREEN MASALA

**M**asala—which is said to stem from the Arabic word for “necessities”—truly is a necessity in East African cooking. Indian traders, as well as British colonialists who had acquired a fondness for this traditional blend of chilies and spices, brought masala with them when they settled on African shores, and it is now used throughout the region. There’s no one right way to make a masala—recipes vary from region to region and family to family—but I like this distinctive version, which adds a strong, balanced flavor to meat, fish, and vegetable stews. You can use it in any recipe that calls for dried curry powder.

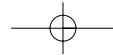
**½ cup plus 2 tablespoons olive oil**  
**One 3-inch piece ginger, peeled and grated**  
**4 garlic cloves, minced**  
**8 jalapeño chilies, seeds and ribs removed, chopped**  
**1 teaspoon cardamom seeds**  
**1 teaspoon ground turmeric**  
**1 teaspoon coriander seeds**  
**2 tablespoons white wine vinegar**

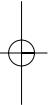
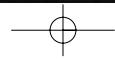
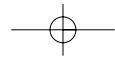
Heat 2 tablespoons of the olive oil in a medium sauté pan over medium heat. Add the ginger, garlic, and jalapeños and sauté until the garlic is golden, about 4 minutes. Add the cardamom, turmeric, and coriander and sauté until fragrant, about 1 minute. Remove from the heat.

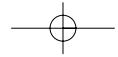
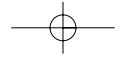
Transfer to a blender, add the white wine vinegar, and blend well to combine. With the blender running on low speed, add the remaining  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup oil in a thin, steady stream, blending until well combined.

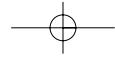
*Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 1 week or in the freezer for up to 3 weeks.*

**MAKES 1 CUP**









## HARISSA

**T**ypical North African flavors don't feature the spiciness you see throughout the rest of the continent. The exception is harissa, a fiery red paste that can be found in virtually every Tunisian kitchen. It's the hottest spice mix in the region—much sharper than the more floral blends typical of North African cooking—and it is usually served as an accompaniment to couscous or as a flavoring for soups and stews. When making harissa, it is preferable to freshly grind the spices for the strongest flavor.

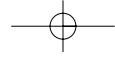
**¾ cup olive oil**  
**2 garlic cloves, minced**  
**1 teaspoon ground caraway**  
**1 cup mild chili powder**  
**1 tablespoon ground coriander**  
**1 teaspoon salt**  
**2 tablespoons chopped mint**

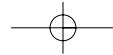
Heat the oil in a small sauté pan over medium heat. When the oil shimmers, add the garlic and sauté until golden, about 4 minutes.

Remove the pan from the heat. Add the caraway, chili powder, coriander, salt, and mint and stir to combine. Let cool.

*Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks.*

**MAKES 1½ CUPS**





## JERK MIX

**F**eaturing notes of cinnamon, thyme, and ginger, this Jamaican-inspired rub is an excellent seasoning for chicken, pork, beef, shrimp, or firm white fish. Most Jamaican chefs grind the spices by hand in a mortar and pestle, a technique I recommend to retain the spices' natural, aromatic oils. I also suggest toasting the spices first, which enhances and mellows their flavor. If you have only ground spices on hand it's perfectly fine to use them, but the flavors won't be as intense.

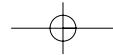
2 tablespoons olive oil  
 6 garlic cloves, minced  
 2 jalapeño chilies, seeds and ribs removed, finely chopped  
 1 tablespoon ground allspice  
 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon  
 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper  
 2 tablespoons brown sugar  
 1 teaspoon white pepper  
 1 tablespoon dried thyme  
 1 teaspoon salt  
 1 teaspoon ground ginger  
 4 scallions, trimmed and chopped  
 ½ cup fresh lime juice  
 ½ cup red wine vinegar

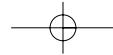
Heat the oil in a small sauté pan over medium heat. When the oil shimmers, add the garlic and jalapeños and sauté until the garlic just starts to color, about 3 minutes. Add the allspice, cinnamon, cayenne, and brown sugar and cook, stirring constantly, until the sugar melts and the mixture starts to clump together. Remove from the heat and let cool slightly.

Transfer the mixture to a blender. Add the white pepper, thyme, salt, ginger, scallions, lime juice, and red wine vinegar and blend until smooth.

*Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 10 days.*

**MAKES 1 CUP**





## RAS AL-HANOUT

**T**he Bedouin Arabs who settled the Maghreb in the seventh century forever changed the region's cuisine with their introduction of saffron, nutmeg, cinnamon, ginger, cloves, cumin, and other rich spices of the East, establishing the region as the heart of the spice trade between Europe, Africa, and the Middle East.

To me, the blend in this recipe is the embodiment of North African cooking—it incorporates the flavors of the region and imparts a distinctive note to the traditional couscous dishes and tagines. The name "ras al-hanout" literally translates as "best of the shop," which is not surprising considering that expert spice merchants make the blend using as many as thirty different spices. Here in the United States, you can find ras al-hanout blends at specialty shops, or you can make your own.

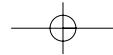
This recipe is a simple, basic spice mix that also makes an excellent rub for almost anything—chicken, lamb, or meaty fish steaks like salmon, tuna, or swordfish. For best results, use whole spices and grind them by hand in a mortar and pestle or spice grinder.

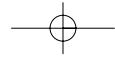
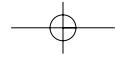
**1/4 cup ground cinnamon  
2 tablespoons ground turmeric  
1 tablespoon freshly ground black pepper  
1½ teaspoons ground nutmeg  
1½ teaspoons ground cardamom, preferably freshly ground  
1½ teaspoons ground cloves**

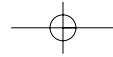
Combine all the spices in a small bowl and blend well. To intensify the flavors, lightly toast the amount you need just before using.

*Store in a tightly sealed container in a cool, dark place for up to 3 weeks.*

**MAKES ABOUT ½ CUP**







## SPICED BUTTER

The spiced mixture known as nit'ir qibe, which begins with clarified butter, is kept handy in most Ethiopian kitchens to add flavor to meat and vegetable stews. In fact, virtually no meal in Ethiopia is made without nit'ir qibe, which gives the cooking its beautifully layered signature flavors. You see clarified butter used in many different cuisines—French, Indian, Asian, and Middle Eastern—because removing the milk solids lets you cook over much higher heat without burning. It also has the added bonus of having a much longer shelf life than regular butter—an important consideration in poor man's cooking, where waste is not an option. The butter will solidify when chilled, but it will become liquid again when left at room temperature.

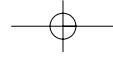
- 1 pound unsalted butter**
- ½ medium red onion, coarsely chopped**
- 1 garlic clove, minced**
- One 3-inch piece ginger, peeled and finely chopped**
- 1 teaspoon fenugreek seeds**
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin**
- 1 teaspoon cardamom seeds**
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano**
- ½ teaspoon ground turmeric**
- 8 basil leaves**

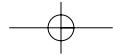
Melt the butter in a medium saucepan over low heat, stirring frequently. As foam rises to the top, skim and discard it. Continue cooking, without letting the butter brown, until no more foam appears. Add the onion, garlic, ginger, fenugreek, cumin, cardamom, oregano, turmeric, and basil and continue cooking for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Remove from the heat and let stand until the spices settle. Strain through a fine-mesh sieve before using.

*Store in the refrigerator in a tightly covered container for up to 3 weeks.*

**MAKES 1½ CUPS**





## YOGURT RUB

**N**orth African cooks rely on an interplay of flavors that makes the food exciting and intriguing. Tangy yogurt is used to add a natural sourness to chicken, fish, and lamb dishes, and gives a particularly nice touch to grilled foods. Because this is a liquidy rub, it can be messy to work with. You can wrap the foods you are grilling or roasting in foil to avoid drips, but I prefer the richer flavors you get from putting the rub directly in contact with the heat. You may wonder why potatoes are included: they bind the rub together and help it adhere to the meat.

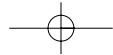
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 1 teaspoon mustard seeds
- 1 teaspoon coriander seeds
- 4 cloves
- 3 cups milk
- 2 Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and thinly sliced
- 2 medium Spanish onions, coarsely chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, crushed
- 2 chilies, seeds and ribs removed, finely chopped
- 1 cup plain yogurt

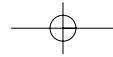
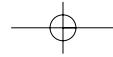
Heat a medium saucepan over high heat. Add the cumin, cinnamon sticks, mustard seeds, coriander seeds, and cloves and toast until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add the milk and potatoes and bring to a simmer. Simmer for 5 minutes, then add the onions, garlic, and chilies and simmer for 25 minutes, or until the potatoes are tender.

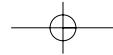
Transfer to a medium bowl. Remove the cinnamon sticks and mash the potatoes with a fork. Let cool, then stir in the yogurt.

*Store in a tightly covered container in the refrigerator for 4 days.*

**MAKES 3 CUPS**







## Z A'ATAR

**Z**a'atar is one of my favorites of North Africa's many spice blends. Delicate and fragrant, it has a distinctive citrusy flavor from the sumac and a rich texture that makes it an excellent rub for fish, poultry, or meats, or to add bright flavor to soups and stews. I also like to mix three parts za'atar with one part olive oil for a delicious dip for bread.

**2 tablespoons sesame seeds**  
**1 tablespoon dried thyme**  
**1 tablespoon dried oregano**  
**2 tablespoons ground sumac** (see page 5)  
**1 teaspoon salt**

Toast the sesame seeds in a small sauté pan over low heat until golden brown, about 1½ minutes. Remove from the heat and set aside to cool.

Mix together the thyme, oregano, and sumac in a small bowl, then stir in the sesame seeds and salt.

*Store in a tightly sealed container in a cool, dark place for up to 2 weeks.*

**MAKES ½ CUP**