

September's Spice of the Month: Sesame Seeds

As baking season approaches, sesame seeds offer a delicious and versatile way to infuse your treats with a unique nutty flavor and satisfying crunch.



PLEASE STOP BY THE LIBRARY TO PICK-UP YOUR PACKET WHILE SUPPLIES LAST.

Where do Sesame Seeds Come From?

Sesame seeds are derived from the *Sesamum Indicum* Plant, which is native to the Sunda Islands in Indonesia. This ancient oilseed plant is the oldest known cultivated plant, with a history spanning over 4,000 years. Originally grown in Indonesia, sesame seeds soon found their way to Asia and parts of Africa, including Egypt. Thereafter, sesame seeds spread to other parts of the world.

Historical uses of Sesame Seeds

Historically, sesame seeds were used for more than just cooking. In ancient Egypt, they were believed to have magical powers and were used in rituals and food offerings. They symbolized prosperity and fertility in Greece and often featured at weddings to celebrate the newlyweds. In traditional Chinese medicine sesame seeds were used to treat various ailments due to their high nutrient content.

Black Sesame Seeds have a stronger, more robust, nutty flavor compared to white sesame seeds, which are milder in taste. This makes black sesame seeds ideal for dishes that need a potent, nutty crunch. Black sesame seeds are traditionally used in Asian and Middle Eastern cuisines, particularly in desserts.

In terms of appearance, black sesame seeds can add a striking visual contrast to dishes, especially when sprinkled over light-colored foods like rice or bread. It also turns out that black sesame seeds are loaded with potent antioxidants, which confer various health benefits.

Black sesame seeds have been shown to have anti-inflammatory and cholesterol-lowering properties. They're a valuable source of [iron](#), manganese, phosphorus, [zinc](#), [vitamin E](#) and selenium. Importantly, they're loaded with [plant polyphenols](#) and [lignans](#), which can [help improve heart health](#), [hormone health](#) and [bone health](#).

White Sesame Seeds on the other hand, have a more subtle taste that doesn't overpower the other ingredients in a dish. This makes them highly versatile and widely used in different meals, from baking and cooking to garnishing.

White sesame seeds are also used to make tahini, a sesame seed paste with a sweet yet savoury and nutty flavour. White sesame seeds can also provide a textural contrast without altering the visual aesthetics of darker-hued dishes. Like the black variety, [white sesame seeds offer a wealth of health benefits](#). They are associated with [improvements in heart health](#) and [brain health](#) and can reduce inflammation.

Aroma and Flavor Profile of Sesame Seeds

Sesame seeds possess a distinct 'umami' flavour profile that brings something special to everyday dishes. When raw, they have a subtle, mild nuttiness. However, sesame seeds really come into their own when they are toasted. Toasting sesame seeds deepens their flavour, releasing a beautiful, rich nuttiness that is both sweet and slightly smoky. It also brings a wonderful, inviting aroma - nutty, warm, and slightly earthy. This complex flavour profile makes them a versatile ingredient, fitting seamlessly into a diverse range of dishes across multiple cuisines.

Source: The Nut Market, James Street, Australia



Dark Chocolate Sesame Bars

Ingredients

- 1 cup of [sesame seeds](#)
- 1/2 cup of honey or maple syrup
- 1 tsp of vanilla extract
- A pinch of salt
- 200 grams or 8 oz of [dark chocolate](#) (at least 70% cocoa)

Method

1. In a pan, [toast the sesame seeds](#) over medium heat until they become golden brown. Make sure to stir continuously to avoid burning them.
2. In a mixing bowl, combine the toasted sesame seeds, honey (or maple syrup), vanilla extract, and a pinch of salt. Stir until everything is well combined.
3. Line a baking dish with baking paper and pour the sesame seed mixture into it. Spread it evenly with a spatula and press it down firmly.
4. Melt the dark chocolate in a microwave-safe bowl in 30-second intervals, stirring after each interval until the chocolate is fully melted and smooth.
5. Pour the melted chocolate over the sesame seed mixture, spreading it evenly to cover the entire surface.
6. Refrigerate the dish for at least 2 hours or until the bars are firm.
7. Once set, cut the bars into squares or rectangles.
8. Enjoy these Dark Chocolate Sesame Bars as a decadent yet healthy dessert!



Sesame-Crusted Salmon with Ginger Soy Glaze

Ingredients

- 4 salmon fillets
- 2 tablespoons of soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons of honey
- 1 tablespoon of grated ginger
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 2 tablespoons of [sesame seeds](#)
- Salt and pepper to taste

Method

1. In a small bowl, mix together soy sauce, honey, grated ginger, and minced garlic.
2. Preheat the oven to 190°C.
3. Season the salmon fillets with salt and pepper on both sides.
4. Place sesame seeds in a shallow dish and coat salmon fillets on one side.
5. Heat a large skillet over medium-high heat and add salmon fillets – sesame seed side down.
6. Cook for 2-3 minutes until seeds are golden brown.
7. Flip the salmon fillets and pour the soy glaze mixture over them.
8. Transfer to a lined baking tray and bake for 10-12 minutes until salmon is cooked through.
9. Serve with your choice of sides and enjoy a delicious, healthy meal.



Sesame Chicken

Ingredients

Sauce

- ¼ cup soy sauce
- 2 Tbsp water
- 1 Tbsp toasted sesame oil
- 3 Tbsp brown sugar**
- 1 Tbsp rice vinegar
- 1 tsp grated fresh ginger***
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- ½ Tbsp cornstarch
- 1 Tbsp sesame seeds

Chicken

- 2 Tbsp cooking oil
- 1 lb boneless skinless chicken thighs
- 1 large egg
- 2 Tbsp cornstarch
- 1 pinch each salt and pepper

For Serving

- 4 cups cooked jasmine rice
- 2 whole green onions

Instructions for Sesame Chicken

1. First, prepare the sauce. In a small bowl stir together the soy sauce, water, sesame oil, brown sugar, rice vinegar, fresh ginger, minced garlic, cornstarch, and sesame seeds. (Grate the ginger with a small-holed cheese grater). Set the sauce aside.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together the egg, 2 Tbsp cornstarch, and a pinch of salt and pepper. Trim any excess fat from the chicken thighs, then cut them into small 1 inch pieces. Toss the chicken in the egg and cornstarch mixture.
3. Add the cooking oil to a large skillet and heat it over medium flame. Wait until the skillet is very hot, then swirl the skillet to make sure the oil coats the entire surface. Add the batter coated chicken and spread it out into a single layer over the surface of the skillet.
4. Allow the chicken pieces to cook, undisturbed, until golden brown on the bottom. Then, carefully flip the chicken, breaking up the pieces into smaller clumps as you flip. Continue to cook the chicken until golden brown on the other side. Stir the chicken as little as possible to avoid breaking the egg coating from the surface of the chicken.
5. Once the chicken is cooked through and golden brown on all sides, pour the sauce over top. Toss the chicken to coat in the sauce. As the sauce comes up to a simmer, it will begin to thicken. Continue to gently stir the chicken in the sauce until it has thickened, then turn off the heat.
6. Serve the chicken over a bed of rice and sprinkle the sliced green onions over top.



Tahini Butter Cookies

These tahini butter cookies melt in your mouth, with nutty, savory notes from tahini.

Prep Time: 20 mins

Cook Time: 15 mins

Chill Time: 2 hrs

Stand Time: 5 mins

Total Time: 2 hrs 40 mins

Servings: 28

Yield: 28 cookies

Ingredients

3/4 cup butter, softened
1 cup tahini (sesame seed paste)
3/4 cup packed brown sugar
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
2 cups all-purpose flour
1/4 cup sesame seeds (optional)

Directions

Mix butter and tahini in a large bowl with an electric mixer at medium speed until combined, about 30 seconds.

Add brown sugar, vanilla, baking powder, and salt. Mix at medium speed, scraping sides of bowl as needed, 1 minute. Stir in flour until combined. Chill, covered, at least 2 hours or up to 12 hours.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F (180 degrees C). Line 2 (10x15-inch) baking sheets with parchment paper. Place sesame seeds in a small bowl.

Roll dough into 1 1/4-inch balls. Dip tops of balls in sesame seeds to lightly coat; arrange 1 1/2 inches apart on prepared baking sheets.

Bake in the preheated oven until bottoms are light brown, about 12 minutes. Let cool on cookie sheets for 2 minutes. Transfer cookies to wire racks; let cool completely. Store cookies in an airtight container at room temperature up to 5 days.