

# Did You Know?

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## Mace, *Myristica fragrans*

- The tropical evergreen tree *Myristica fragrans*, native to the Spice Islands of Indonesia, is the source of nutmeg and mace which are similar but each have a distinct flavor and fragrance.
- Nutmeg is the dried seed of this tree and mace is the red, waxy and net-like aril that surrounds the seed.
- The seed forms inside a fleshy fruit. The seed (nutmeg) is separated from the fruit, and the red aril (mace) is then removed from the outside of the seed to dry.
- Mace is ground or powdered for use. It can also be used whole or roughly broken. This is referred to as blade mace.
- Both nutmeg and mace are considered “warming spices”. Yet their flavors are different. The flavor of nutmeg is described as nutty, sweet, intense, and earthy. It is stronger in flavor and fragrance than mace. Mace is delicate, less sweet, and slightly peppery in flavor.
- Mace compliments and adds depth to savory and sweet dishes, including sausages, soups, stews, biryanis, curries, sauces, rice, baked goods, custards and beverages. It is also an ingredient in cheeses like Gouda and Cheddar.
- Mace is often used in Caribbean, European, Indian and Middle Eastern cuisines.
- Spice blends like Garam masala, jerk, chili and curry seasonings, seafood blends, pumpkin pie spices and pickling flavoring include mace and often nutmeg as well.
- Nutmeg and mace have rich histories dating back to the Middle Ages when they were valued for their flavor, food preservation properties and symbol of wealth and nobility.
- Wars were fought to maintain control of production and trade. Now Guatemala is a primary producer followed by India and Indonesia.
- Mace does have a history of medicinal uses dating back to the indigenous peoples of the Banda Islands where it originated. 6<sup>th</sup> century Byzantine and Chinese practitioners found uses for mace and by the Middle Ages it was used to help protect against the Black Plague.
- Today the essential oil of mace is used in wellness products and is valued for its calming fragrance.

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