

# Did You Know?

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## Nutmeg, *Myristica fragrans*

- Nutmeg is the seed of a tropical evergreen tree native to the Spice Islands of Indonesia.
- The fleshy aril that surrounds the seed (the net-like red substance) is the source of the spice mace.
- Botanically speaking, the nutmeg is a seed, not a tree nut and is not considered an allergen by those allergic to peanuts or tree nuts.
- The large nutmeg seed is grated for use in a variety of sweet and savory foods, including baked goods, candy, puddings, meats, potatoes, vegetables, egg dishes, sauces. It pairs especially well with creamy sauces, cheese and egg based dishes.
- Nutmeg is used in spiced beverages such as chai, eggnog and mulled wine as well sprinkled over flavored coffee drinks.
- Spice blends from around the world include nutmeg, including curry and garam masala (Indian), pumpkin spice (United States), Advieh (a Persian mix), Quatre Epices (French), Jerk (Caribbean) and Ras el Hanout (North African).
- Nutmeg seeds are dried gradually in the sun for six to eight weeks.
- Nutmeg is sold as a whole seed or ground. When ground, nutmeg loses flavor quickly so is best purchased in small amounts or ground just prior to using.
- Small nutmeg graters have a small space in the top to store the nut. This or the smallest blades of a box grater can be used to prepare nutmeg for use.
- In very high amounts (exceeding culinary use), nutmeg is a hallucinogen and can be toxic.
- The Dutch and the British fought over control of the nutmeg industry and the Spice Islands. The British lost and in exchange received a colony in North America. This colony was renamed New York.
- Nutmeg was thought to have a variety of medicinal properties over the centuries. British physicians in the 1660s believed it to be a cure for the bubonic plague.
- Nutmeg is one of the original flavorings in Coco-Cola.