

Another look at Cinnamon

With the holidays, Thanksgiving to be specific just around the corner, warming spices with cinnamon in the lead, are seemingly everywhere.

Lets have another look at this versatile spice. There are many varieties and they vary one form the other.

The sweet-spicy aroma of cinnamon is indicative of the holiday season and invokes memories of grandma's baking. Cinnamon was once the most prized spice in the world and is likely found in most kitchens around the world today.



The History of Cinnamon

Cinnamon is native to Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon), and references to it have been found in Chinese writings dating as early as 2800 B.C. Cinnamon eventually found its way westward when it was brought to Europe by the Spanish about 400 years ago. Being a relatively new land with a lack of sophisticated cooking, cinnamon took longer to become popular in the Americas.



Varieties of Cinnamon

Cinnamon is a spice obtained from the inner bark of evergreen trees, all originating from the genus [Cinnamomum](#). The trees take about 10 years to grow. Cinnamon is harvested by hand. When harvested, it is light in color and becomes dark brown as it dries. It is then ground into a powder, but I am sure you have seen whole cinnamon sticks too.

Cinnamon is separated into two main categories: cassia cinnamon and Ceylon cinnamon. Following are the four main types of commercially cultivated cinnamon.

Cinnamomum verum (Ceylon Cinnamon) – This is the original or true cinnamon. It is native to Southern India but is widely grown in Mexico and East Africa. Ceylon cinnamon is soft and is said to contain all of the health-promoting properties of cinnamon with none of the toxic properties. It is thought to help regulate blood sugar and Ceylon cinnamon's active ingredient, cinnamaldehyde, may have **Cinnamomum burmannii (Korintje)** – This is Indonesian Cinnamon, the most common and least expensive of the cinnamons that are sold in the United States. It accounts for about 70% of North American cinnamon imports. Native to Southeast Asia, Indonesian cinnamon is mild and works for everything.

Cinnamomum cassia (Saigon Cinnamon) – Actually Vietnamese Cinnamon, Saigon cinnamon is a misnomer because it was the trading point. There is no cinnamon grown near Saigon. It is spicy and sweet. This kind of cinnamon is a rich source of coumarin; it may range from 7 to 18 milligrams per teaspoon (2.6 grams). Ceylon cinnamon only contains trace amounts

of coumarin. Studies have found that eating too much coumarin may cause liver toxicity and damage. Check with trusted sources like [NutritionFacts.org](https://nutritionfacts.org) for more information.

Royal Cinnamon (*Cinnamomum loureiroi*) – This is harder to find on grocery store shelves, but spice purveyors such as Burlap & Barrel and Penzys often sell it. It's mostly grown in central Vietnam. Very sweet and a bit spicy, it is a cinnamon I like to use in combination with milder cinnamons. Why the name? The area that [Burlap & Barrel](https://burlapandbarrel.com) gets it from used to be the cinnamon provider to the royal court.



What's Great About Cinnamon?

Cinnamon has anti-bacterial properties and was a prized spice for its ability to preserve meat in the days before refrigeration. It was also used to treat various medical conditions, including sore throat, cough, and hoarseness.

1 teaspoon serving of cinnamon provides:

1% of DV of magnesium.

3% of DV of iron.

7% of DV of calcium.



How to Buy, Store and Eat Cinnamon

- Culinary cinnamon can be purchased ground or as sticks.
- Not all cinnamon is created equal, but buying from a trusted source is important.
- While cinnamon doesn't spoil or expire, it can lose its potency over time. Buy smaller quantities and do a sniff test periodically.
- Store cinnamon in a tightly sealed container out of direct sunlight.

Cinnamon Fun Facts

- Cinnamon is used in both sweet and savory dishes.
- Cinnamon sticks are also called quills.
- Cassia cinnamon contains high amounts of *coumarin*, which can be toxic in large quantities, especially for someone with liver issues.
- Cinnamon oil is a highly effective mosquito repellent.
- Did you ever highlight your hair with lemon juice? You can achieve a similar look by mixing cinnamon into your conditioner and spending some time in the sun.

Make Fran's Award-Winning Un-Coffeecake

Why that name? I am a coffee drinker? No idea but it won a reader a first prize ribbon at a non-vegan cake contest (she said, in cowboy country' and it won me my job as pastry chef at NYC's Angelica Kitchen. Find the recipe at the link below.

<https://francostigan.com/cinnamon-walnut-un-coffeecake/>