

September's Spice is: Chinese Five Spice

Chinese Five Spice is a spice mixture of five or more spices—commonly star anise, cloves, Chinese cinnamon, Sichuan pepper, and fennel seeds. It is used in almost all branches of Chinese cuisine. The five flavors of the spices reflect the five traditional Chinese elements of wood, fire, earth, metal, and water and flavors (sweet, bitter, sour, salty, and savory).

Five-spice powder is used as a spice rub for chicken, duck, goose, pork, and seafood, in red cooking recipes, or added to the breading for fried foods. The five-spice powder mixture has followed the Chinese diaspora and has been incorporated into other national cuisines throughout Asia.

A seasoned salt can be easily made by dry-roasting common salt with five-spice powder under low heat in a dry pan until the spice and salt are well mixed. Five-spice powder can also add complexity and savoriness to sweets and savory dishes alike. In Southern China, *Cinnamomum loureiroi* and Mandarin orange peel are commonly used as substitutes for *Cinnamomum cassia* and cloves respectively. These ingredients collectively produce southern five-spice powder's distinctive, slightly different flavor profile.

It has a traditional use as an antiseptic and a cure for indigestion. In one study, the potential antioxidant capacities of Chinese five-spice powder with varying proportion of individual spice ingredients was investigated through four standard methods. The results suggest that clove is the major contributor to the high antioxidant capacities of the five-spice powder, whereas the other four ingredients contribute only to the flavor.