

March's Spice is: Sage

Plant:

Salvia officinalis is native to the northern Mediterranean coastal areas and has been cultivated for millennia. There are more than 750 varieties of *Salvia*, but *Salvia officinalis* is the primary variety used for cooking. Sage is a hardy perennial that grows to around 35 inches tall with wiry green and purple-hued stems. In spring flowers bloom that attract bees for pollination and creates the highly sought after sage honey. Plants quickly become woody so they must be replanted every 3 years to maintain the crop. Sage is pungent like rosemary and thyme. It has a fresh, head-clearing aroma with a herbaceous, savory and astringent flavor.

History:

The botanical name *Salvia* is derived from Latin *salvere* meaning “to save” or “to heal” due to its medicinal properties. 9th century emperor Charlemagne had sage grown on imperial farms across central Europe, and throughout the Middle Ages it was considered indispensable as medicine. Sage’s astringent grease-cutting attributes make it perfect for seasoning fatty meats such as pork, goose and duck. Sage is a versatile herb as its flavor is not diminished by extended cooking times, it also pairs well with carbohydrates, vegetables and proteins.