

Star Anise



History

Star anise, dry fruits of the star anise tree (*Illicium verum*), used as a spice and source of pharmaceutical chemicals. It is one of the ingredients in China's famed five spice powder. The plant is indigenous to the southeastern part of China and to Vietnam. The flavor and uses of the fruit are similar to those of anise (*Pimpinella anisum*), to which it is unrelated. The volatile, aromatic essential oil is commonly used for flavoring candies, liqueurs, and perfumes. In the pharmaceutical industry, star anise is a major source of shikimic acid, which is used in the synthesis of the anti-influenza drug oseltamivir (Tamiflu). It is one of the five dried spices—including fennel, cassia, cloves, and Sichuan pepper—that make up the famed Chinese five-spice powder.

The fruit takes its name from the starlike arrangement of its carpels around a central axis. The dried fruit is about 0.25 to 0.5 cm (0.1 to 0.2 inch) in diameter; individual carpels are usually about 1 cm in length and contain a single seed. Dried carpels are hard, rough, and reddish brown; the seeds are smooth, lustrous, and light brown. The dried fruit's essential oil content is about 3 percent, and its principal component is anethole.

Slow Cooker Spiced Poached Pears

• **INGREDIENTS**

- 1-1/2 cups dry red wine or cranberry juice
- 1/3 cup packed brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons dried cherries
- 1 tablespoon ground cinnamon
- 1 whole star anise
- 1 dried Sichuan peppercorn, optional
- 4 ripe Bosc pears

GANACHE:

- 6 ounces bittersweet chocolate, chopped
- 1/4 cup heavy whipping cream

TOPPINGS:

- 2 tablespoons pine nuts
- Fresh blackberries
- Sweetened whipped cream, optional



DIRECTIONS

1. In a 3-qt. slow cooker, mix wine, brown sugar, cherries, cinnamon, star anise and, if desired, peppercorn until blended. Peel and cut pears lengthwise in half. Remove cores, leaving a small well in the center of each. Arrange pears in wine mixture.
2. Cook, covered, on low 4-5 hours or until pears are almost tender. Discard star anise and peppercorn.
3. Place chocolate in a small bowl. In a small saucepan, bring cream just to a boil. Pour over chocolate; stir with a whisk until smooth.
4. To serve, remove pears to dessert dishes; drizzle with some of the poaching liquid. Spoon ganache into wells of pears. Top with pine nuts and blackberries. If desired, serve with whipped cream.

Find it online: <https://www.tasteofhome.com/recipes/slow-cooker-spiced-poached-pears/>

Thai Chicken Noodle Soup



INGREDIENTS

- 1 large onion, halved
- 1 piece fresh gingerroot (3 to 4 inches), halved lengthwise
- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- 1 rotisserie chicken
- 1 cinnamon stick (3 inches)
- 5 whole cloves
- 3 whole star anise
- 1 teaspoon coriander seeds
- 1 teaspoon fennel seed
- 3 quarts reduced-sodium chicken broth
- 1 package (8.8 ounces) rice noodles
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons fish sauce
- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- Optional: Bean sprouts, fresh basil leaves, fresh cilantro leaves, thinly sliced green onions, chili garlic sauce, fish sauce and lime wedges

INGREDIENTS

- Preheat broiler. Place onion and ginger in a foil-lined 15x10x1-in. baking pan; drizzle with oil. Broil 4-6 in. from heat until well browned, 8-10 minutes. Meanwhile, remove chicken from bones; reserve carcass and shred meat. Place carcass, onion, ginger, spices and broth in a 6-qt slow cooker. Cook on low 6-8 hours.
- Cook noodles according to package instructions. Strain soup and keep warm; discard carcass, vegetables and spices. Stir in brown sugar, fish sauce and lime juice. Place noodles and chicken in soup bowls. Ladle broth into soup bowls. Add toppings of your choice.

Find it online: <https://www.tasteofhome.com/recipes/thai-chicken-noodle-soup/>

East African Pilau Rice

INGREDIENTS

- 2-3 tablespoons cooking oil/butter
- 1/3-1/2 cup cashew, optional
- 1 teaspoon cumin spice
- 1/2 teaspoon cardamom spice
- 1/2 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1/4 teaspoon curry spice
- 1/2 teaspoon star anise
- 1 teaspoon pepper flakes optional
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 2 teaspoons minced garlic
- 1 teaspoon minced ginger
- 1 small jalapenos pepper, deseeded and chopped
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1-2 tomatoes, chopped
- 1 small red bell pepper, chopped
- 2 cups Basmati rice
- 4 cups liquid, broth or water, and/or coconut milk
- 1 1/2 teaspoon salt or more, adjust to taste
- 1/2 teaspoon white/black pepper



INSTRUCTIONS

1. Heat a saucepan with oil/butter. Sauté the cashews for about 2-3 minutes.
2. Then add all the spices – cumin, cardamom, smoked paprika, curry, star anise, pepper flakes, bay leaf, and cinnamon stick. Stir for about 1 minute. Throw in the garlic, ginger, jalapeños pepper, and onions. Continue cooking for another minute. Add tomatoes, bell pepper and continue cooking for about 2-3 minutes
3. Stir in the rice and cook for about 2 minutes, then add 4 cups of broth /coconut milk, salt, and pepper, and bring to a boil.
4. Reduce heat, cover, and simmer until rice is completely cooked – about 18- 20 minutes. As the rice cooks, you may add more stock if needed. Once it's cooked, fluff the rice and remove the cinnamon stick, bay leaf and serve.

Find it online: <https://www.africanbites.com/east-african-pelau/#wprm-recipe-container-568258>