

# Spice Season

*Turning to India for an easy feast*

Spring is about to get a little spicy.

We turned to India. After all, the cast of such familiar springtime players as spinach, rhubarb, lamb and yogurt are plenty delicious on their own. But a little spice transforms.

To begin, spike your guests' cocktails with Assam tea and ginger. Then, for snacking, try a spinach salad enlivened with butter-fried cashews and mango-chutney vinaigrette.

Dinner's centerpiece is a refreshingly simple coriander- and cumin-dressed leg of lamb, which takes only 20 minutes to cook. To accompany the lamb, yogurt is topped with pan-fried okra and a spunky spice blend, and cauliflower is roasted with a quintet of intoxicating spices. (Bonus: Make a spiced rhubarb chutney for a sweet-tart contrast.)

Finally, dessert: a quivering panna cotta gilded with cardamom-sugared rose petals.

Your spice cabinet—and your guests—will feel duly appreciated.

## *The Menu*

### *Trade Route*

*Spinach Salad with Mango Vinaigrette and Cashews*

*Okra Raita*

*Spice-Roasted Cauliflower*

*Naan with Nigella Seeds and Cilantro*

*Butterflied Leg of Lamb with Cilantro and Spiced Oil*

*Cardamom-Coconut Panna Cotta*



# Trade Route

Yield: 1 cocktail

Cook Time: 5 minutes

An appropriate cocktail needs to stand up to the bold flavors coursing through this Indian-inspired menu. Yet it also needs to be light and refreshing. Starting with a base spirit of gin, add freshly squeezed lemon juice and sweet tea; fresh ginger gives the cocktail a spicy edge.

## INGREDIENTS

### Sweet Tea

- 1 cup boiling water
- 2 bags of black tea
- 2 tablespoons granulated sugar

### Cocktail

- 2 ounces Genever (First made in the 17th century in Holland, Genever is the slightly sweeter and less potent forefather of gin)
- 1 ounce fresh lemon juice
- $\frac{3}{4}$  teaspoon finely grated ginger
- Ice
- Candied ginger

## DIRECTIONS

1. Make the sweet tea: In a medium bowl, pour the boiling water over the tea bags. Set aside for 5 minutes. Remove the tea bags and stir in the sugar until dissolved.
2. Make the cocktail: In a cocktail shaker, combine the Genever, lemon juice, 2 ounces of the sweet tea, the grated ginger and ice. Shake and double strain (using a cocktail strainer and pouring over a fine-mesh strainer) into an ice-filled rocks glass. Garnish with candied ginger and serve.



# Spinach Salad with Mango Vinaigrette and Cashews

Yield: Serves 8

Cook Time: 5 minutes

## INGREDIENTS

½ small red onion, thinly sliced  
1½ teaspoons kosher salt  
2 tablespoons unsalted butter  
1 cup roughly chopped raw cashews  
3 tablespoons [mango chutney](#)  
2 tablespoons grapeseed or canola oil  
Freshly ground black pepper  
1 lime, halved  
6 cups baby spinach

## DIRECTIONS

1. In a fine-mesh sieve or colander, mix the onion with ½ teaspoon of the kosher salt. Set aside for 5 minutes, then rinse under cold water. Transfer to paper towels and set aside.
2. In a large skillet set over medium heat, melt the butter. Add the cashews and cook, shaking the pan often, until the cashews are golden brown, 3 to 4 minutes. Stir in ½ teaspoon of the kosher salt and turn out onto a large plate to cool.
3. In a salad bowl, whisk together the mango chutney, oil, remaining ½ teaspoon of salt, black pepper and the juice of half the lime. Add the spinach, onions and cashews and toss to coat. Squeeze the remaining half lime over the salad, gently toss and serve



# Okra Raita

Yield: Serves 8

Cook Time: 10 minutes

**TT Test Kitchen Tip:** Cumin takes on a smoky flavor when it's dry-toasted in a pan. In a small skillet, add ¼ cup of cumin seeds and toast over medium heat, shaking the pan often, until the seeds become golden and fragrant, about 2 minutes. Transfer to a plate to cool, then pulverize in a spice grinder or coffee mill. Store in an airtight container for up to 6 months.

## INGREDIENTS

3 tablespoons grapeseed or canola oil

¼ pound okra (about 12 pods), stem-end trimmed and pods thinly sliced on a bias

1 teaspoon kosher salt

2 cups plain yogurt

½ teaspoon ground cumin

1 teaspoon [chaat masala](#) (optional)

## DIRECTIONS

1. In a medium skillet set over medium-high heat, heat the oil until it is nearly smoking, 1½ to 2 minutes. Add the sliced okra and ½ teaspoon of the salt and cook, stirring occasionally, until the okra is crisp and browned on all sides, 6 to 8 minutes. Use a spatula to transfer the okra to a paper towel-lined plate and set aside to cool.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together the yogurt, cumin, chaat masala and remaining ½ teaspoon of salt. Sprinkle the fried okra on top and serve immediately.



# Spice-Roasted Cauliflower

**TT Test Kitchen Tip:** To fit the cauliflower on one rimmed sheet pan, use two smaller heads of cauliflower (you can reduce each spice amount by a third if you like) and roast on the middle rack in your oven.

Yield: Serves 8

Cook Time: 1 hour

## INGREDIENTS

1 tablespoon ground cumin  
1 tablespoon ground coriander  
2 teaspoons ground turmeric  
2 teaspoons kosher salt  
2 teaspoons freshly ground black pepper  
1 teaspoon ground cardamom  
2 medium heads cauliflower divided into florets  
¼ cup grapeseed or canola oil

## DIRECTIONS

1. Adjust an oven rack to the upper-middle position and another rack to the lower-middle position. Preheat the oven to 400°.
2. In a small bowl, whisk together the cumin, coriander, turmeric, salt, black pepper and cardamom.
3. In a large bowl, toss the cauliflower with the grapeseed oil and spices until well combined. Turn the mixture out onto two rimmed baking sheets and roast one pan on each rack for 30 minutes. Using a spatula, stir the cauliflower, then rotate the bottom pan to the top rack and the top pan to the bottom rack; return to the oven and continue to roast until tender and browned, 20 to 30 minutes longer. Transfer to a large bowl and serve warm or at room temperature.



## Naan with Nigella Seeds and Cilantro

**TT Test Kitchen Tip:** Nigella, sometimes called black cumin, adds an onion flavor and beautiful color contrast to the naan. Black sesame seeds are a good substitute.

Yield: 8 pieces

Cook Time: 20 minutes (plus overnight chilling and 1 hour of proofing)

### INGREDIENTS

½ cup warm water, divided

1½ teaspoons granulated sugar

¾ teaspoon active dry yeast

¾ cup warm milk

½ cup plain yogurt

6 cups all-purpose flour, divided

1½ teaspoons kosher salt, plus extra for baking

2 tablespoons [ghee](#) (available in Indian markets) or unsalted butter, melted

2 tablespoons [nigella](#) (available in Indian and Middle Eastern markets) or black sesame seeds

2 tablespoons coarsely chopped cilantro

½ cup cold water, divided

### DIRECTIONS

1. In a large bowl, whisk together ¼ cup of the water, the sugar and the yeast. Cover with plastic wrap and set aside for 5 minutes (after 5 minutes, the mixture should look cloudy and bloomy at the surface).
2. To the yeast mixture, add the milk, yogurt and remaining ¼ cup of warm water, then stir in 2 cups of the flour until nearly incorporated. Add the salt and continue to stir until no dry spots of flour remain (the mixture will be very loose and wet and not dough-like). Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight.
3. The next day, flour a cutting board with ¾ cup of the flour and place 3 cups in a large bowl. Remove the dough from the refrigerator, discard the plastic and turn the dough out onto the floured board. Sprinkle the top of the dough with the remaining ¼ cup of flour and gently roll and shape the dough (use a lot of flour from the

board--the dough is sticky) into a 12- to 14-inch-long log. Using a knife or bench scraper, divide the dough in half, then into quarters so you have 8 pieces of dough.

4. Turn each piece of dough onto a cut side and fold the corners of each piece of dough up and onto the middle of the piece. Turn the ball over, cup your hands around the dough and push it in a circular motion to form a ball. Sprinkle with more flour from the board, then cover with a kitchen towel or damp paper towel. Set aside for 1 hour.

5. Place a pizza stone on the middle oven rack and a rimmed baking sheet on the lowest oven rack. Preheat the oven to 500°. Place a dough ball in the bowl of flour and turn to coat so it isn't sticky. Repeat with 3 more balls.

6. Remove one piece of naan and flatten it between your palms, then open the oven and gently stretch the piece of naan so it's slightly oblong. Place the dough on the hot stone. Repeat with 3 more pieces of dough, then brush each with ghee and sprinkle with nigella, cilantro and salt. Pour  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of the cold water onto the sheet pan on the bottom rack and quickly close the oven door.

7. Bake until the naan is puffed and just starting to become golden brown in spots, about 8 minutes. Turn the broiler to high and continue cooking the naan until it is golden all over and has a few darker brown spots, about 2 minutes (broiler intensities vary, so watch the naan closely). Use a metal spatula to transfer the naan to a kitchen-towel-lined plate, then wrap the towel over the naan to enclose it. Repeat with the remaining naan, ghee, nigella, cilantro and salt. Serve the naan warm.





# Butterflied Leg of Lamb with Cilantro and Spiced Oil

**TT Test Kitchen Tip:** To crush coriander seeds, place them in a resealable plastic bag and use a heavy bottomed pan or pot or a meat mallet to smash them (or pulse a few times in a spice grinder or coffee mill).

Yield: Serves 8

Cook Time: 20 minutes

## INGREDIENTS

2 tablespoons plus ½ teaspoon kosher salt, divided  
1½ tablespoons freshly ground black pepper  
4 to 4½-pound butterflied leg of lamb  
5 garlic cloves, 2 cloves finely chopped and 3 cloves thinly sliced  
3 tablespoons grapeseed or canola oil, divided  
½ cup roughly chopped cilantro leaves  
1 tablespoon lightly crushed coriander seeds  
1 tablespoon brown or black mustard seeds  
1 teaspoon cumin seeds  
¼ teaspoon dried red pepper flakes

## DIRECTIONS

1. Adjust an oven rack to the upper-middle position so it is 4 inches from the broiler element. Heat the broiler to high and line a rimmed baking sheet with aluminum foil.
2. In a small dish, mix together 2 tablespoons of the kosher salt and the pepper. Set the lamb on a cutting board and rub both sides with the chopped garlic, then season both sides with the salt-and-pepper mixture. Drizzle both sides of the lamb with 1 tablespoon of the grapeseed oil and transfer the lamb to the prepared baking sheet.
3. Broil until browned, 6 to 8 minutes. Turn the lamb over and brown the other side until the lamb is cooked to your liking, 6 to 8 minutes more for medium-rare (125° to 130° on an instant-read thermometer). Take the lamb out of the oven and set aside to rest for 15 minutes. Transfer to a cutting board (reserve any accumulated juices on the pan) and slice crosswise (against the grain) into thin pieces. Place on a serving platter and sprinkle with the cilantro.
4. In a medium skillet, add the remaining 2 tablespoons of the oil, sliced garlic, crushed coriander seeds, mustard seeds, cumin seeds and red pepper flakes. Set the heat to medium and cook, stirring occasionally, until the mustard seeds pop and the garlic is golden, about 1½ to 2 minutes. Add the remaining ½ teaspoon of salt, pour the seasoned oil over the sliced lamb and serve.

# Cardamom-Coconut Panna Cotta

Yield: Serves 8

Cook Time: 1 hour, 10 minutes (plus overnight setting)

**TT Test Kitchen Tip:** Make sure to purchase organic, unsprayed roses for the candied rose petals (optional).

## INGREDIENTS

### Panna Cotta

½ cup unsweetened coconut flakes  
3 cups heavy cream  
1 cup buttermilk  
4 green cardamom pods, lightly crushed  
Pinch kosher salt  
2 teaspoons granulated gelatin  
1 tablespoon water  
½ cup granulated sugar  
½ teaspoon [rose water](#)

### Candied Rose Petals (optional)

1 tablespoon superfine or granulated sugar  
¼ teaspoon ground cardamom  
8 organic, pesticide-free fresh rose petals  
1 egg white, lightly beaten

## DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 350°. Scatter the coconut on a sheet pan and place in the oven. Bake until toasted and golden, about 5 minutes. Remove from the oven and set aside.
2. In a medium saucepan set over medium-high heat, combine the heavy cream, buttermilk, cardamom and salt and bring just to a boil. Remove the pan from the heat, add the toasted coconut and set aside for 1 hour. Strain the mixture through a fine-mesh sieve and discard the solids.
3. In a medium bowl, combine the gelatin and water. Set aside for 5 minutes.
4. In the meantime, return the saucepan to medium heat, add the sugar and cook until the sugar dissolves, about 1 minute. Carefully pour the strained cream mixture over the gelatin mixture and whisk until the gelatin dissolves. Whisk in the rose water and divide the mixture into 8 four-ounce ramekins. Place in the refrigerator and chill until firm, at least 2 hours up to overnight.
5. Make the candied rose petals: Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. In a small bowl, combine the sugar and cardamom. Use a pastry brush to brush both sides of each rose petal with the egg white and carefully dip in the sugar. Set aside to dry completely on the parchment paper.
6. Serve the panna cotta chilled and garnish each serving with rose petals.

# Rhubarb Chutney

Yield: Serves 8

Cook Time: 45 minutes

## INGREDIENTS

¼ cup water

Juice of 1 lime

½ cup granulated sugar

8 curry leaves--stacked, rolled and thinly sliced crosswise (optional)

4 green cardamom pods, cracked

2 dried red chile peppers

1 cinnamon stick

1 tablespoon panch phoran [<http://goo.gl/G6dbW>] (available in Indian markets)

½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1 inch fresh ginger, peeled (use the edge of a teaspoon to scrape off the skin) and finely chopped

3 medium stalks rhubarb, ends trimmed and stalk chopped into ½- to 1-inch pieces

¼ teaspoon kosher salt

## DIRECTIONS

In a medium saucepan set over medium-high heat, bring the water, lime juice and sugar to a simmer, stirring occasionally, until the sugar is dissolved. Add the curry leaves, cardamom, chiles, cinnamon, panch phoran and black pepper and cook, stirring often, until the spices become fragrant, 1 to 2 minutes.

Add the ginger and stir until fragrant, about 1 minute, then stir in the rhubarb and salt. Reduce the heat to medium-low, cover and cook, stirring often, until the rhubarb collapses into a sauce, 6 to 8 minutes. Uncover and continue to cook until a wooden spoon leaves a trail in the bottom of the pot that doesn't immediately fill in, 25 to 35 minutes. Turn off the heat and cool to room temperature, then transfer to a serving dish or an airtight container, cover and refrigerate for up to a week.

