

November Spice Club:

Chinese Five-Spice



Suggested Reading

Shirley Chung, *Chinese Heritage Cooking from My American Kitchen*

Ching-He Huang, *Stir Crazy: 100 Deliciously Healthy Stir-Fry Recipes*

MyRecipes.com, “Everything You Need to Know About Chinese Five-Spice Powder”

Andrea Nguyen, *Vietnamese Food Any Day*

Corinne Trang, *Noodles Every Day*

Chinese Five-Spice

Chinese five-spice is a rich seasoning blend of ground spices. The exact blend can vary between distributors and personal taste, but traditionally includes cassia cinnamon, a variety of Chinese cinnamon; cloves; fennel seeds; star anise; and Szechuan peppercorns. Orange or tangerine peel are also common additions and impart a fruitier flavor profile. Our specific organic five-spice powder includes cinnamon, fennel seed, clove, star anise, and white pepper.

The origin of Chinese five-spice is somewhat unclear, but it is thought to have been used medicinally beginning in the fourth century BCE. Corinne Trang notes in *Noodles Every Day* that the five spices – a punchy blend of salty, sweet, sour, bitter, and spicy – represent nature’s five elements of water, metal, fire, earth, and wood. And boy, does this umami powerhouse deliver! Chinese five-spice is distinctly “tangy-sweet” and has made dishes like Peking duck famous. The spice blend has made its way across the world and is a staple in Vietnamese and Hawaiian cuisine.

Chinese five-spice is generally used and works best with fatty meats like duck and pork; a vegan option has been included for variety and as an example of a different, Anglicized application of this enticing spice mix.

It is best to use the enclosed Chinese five-spice by August 2024. Please send any photos or feedback to Meghan at mfogg@freeportmaine.com.

December Spice Club: Cardamom

Kits will be available for pickup 12/13/21.

Char Siu Chicken

“You can use a stove-top grill pan as suggested here, or prepare a medium charcoal fire or preheat a gas grill to medium and cook the chicken for 10-12 minutes, basting during the last 3 minutes. Enjoy *char siu* chicken for dinner with rice and a quick stir-fried vegetable or salad.”

Andrea Nguyen, *Vietnamese Food Any Day*

RECIPE

1 ¾ lbs. boneless, skinless chicken thighs
1 large garlic clove, minced and mashed
¼ teaspoon Chinese five-spice powder
2 tablespoons honey
Brimming 2 tablespoons hoisin sauce
1 ½ tablespoons soy sauce
1 tablespoon ketchup
Scant 2 teaspoons toasted sesame oil
Your preferred rice or vegetable sides for serving

Pat the chicken thighs with paper towels to remove excess moisture, then trim and discard any big fat pads. If the thighs are large or super-uneven in thickness, butterfly each one (search “how to butterfly a chicken breast” on Google or YouTube if unfamiliar with this technique). Set aside.

In a large bowl, stir together the garlic, five-spice powder, honey, hoisin, soy sauce, ketchup, and sesame oil. Remove 3 tablespoons and set aside for glazing the chicken. Add the chicken to the bowl, coating the pieces well. Cover with plastic wrap and marinate at room temperature for 30 minutes, or refrigerate up to 24 hours (return to room temperature before cooking).

Lightly oil a cast iron stove-top grill pan and set over medium-high heat. Add the chicken and cook for 6-10 minutes, turning several times. To test for doneness, pierce the flesh with the tip of a knife; the chicken is cooked when clear juices flow out. During the last 2 minutes, when the chicken feels firmish, baste with the reserved marinade to freshen flavor and add sheen. Transfer to a platter and let rest 5-10 minutes before serving.

5-Spice Fried Rice with Sweet Potatoes

Bad Manners, badmanners.com

- 1 medium sweet potato ($\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 pound), peeled and diced into cubes
- 2 teaspoons neutral-tasting oil
- 2 tablespoons water, plus more if needed
- $\frac{1}{2}$ small yellow onion, chopped
- 1 carrot, chopped
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon Chinese 5-spice powder
- 1-2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons soy sauce or tamari
- 1 tablespoon rice vinegar
- 1 teaspoon chili paste or Sriracha
- 4 cups cooked short-grain brown rice that's been chilled for a couple hours
- 1 cup bitter greens (watercress, mustard, or arugula), finely chopped
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sliced green onions
- 1 cup frozen green peas, thawed

In a large wok or skillet, heat 1 teaspoon of the oil over medium heat. Add the sweet potato and the water and stir-fry the potato, stirring often. If the potato starts to stick, add a little more of the water as needed. Cook until the potato is close to tender and browning on some sides, 5-8 minutes. Add the onion and carrot and cook until the onions are translucent, about 3 more minutes. Add the 5-spice powder and garlic, mix well, then remove the vegetables from the pan. Scrape the pan clean.

In a small glass, mix together the soy sauce, vinegar, and chili paste. Heat the wok back up over medium heat and add the remaining 1 teaspoon oil. Throw in the rice and stir-fry until it begins to warm, 3-5 minutes. Drizzle the sauce over the rice, mix well, then add the cooked vegetables. Stir-fry for a minute so everything is well mixed. Fold in the greens, green onions, and peas. Turn off heat and serve immediately.