

# October Spice Club:

## *Garam Masala*



## Suggested Reading

Chitra Agrawal, *Vibrant India*

Simon Daly with Roshan Hirani, *Cooking with My Indian Mother-in-Law*

Nayantara Dutta, "Reclaiming Indian Food from the White Gaze," Eater.com

Madhur Jaffrey, *Madhur Jaffrey's Instantly Indian Cookbook*

Urvashi Pitre, *Indian Instant Pot Cookbook*

Suneeta Vaswani, *Easy Indian Cooking*

# Garam Masala

“It’s become so trendy to remove Indian food from its cultural context — the *New York Times*’ masoor dal recipe includes sweet potatoes, which would alarm any auntie — that it’s hard to know what’s authentic as someone who’s still learning.”

Nayantara Dutta, “Reclaiming Indian Food from the White Gaze”

Indian food is in part so delicious and deeply flavored because of the careful toasting of spices — dry or in oil — that are then ground, infused, or drizzled into a dish. The masala dabba Indian spice box pictured on the front of this page exemplifies the orderly and detailed nature of a cuisine that yet manages to vary wildly across regions and borders. Garam masala is a mixture of roasted sweet spices and chilies, and this spice mix itself can vary. Our kit garam masala includes all-organic cardamom, cinnamon, clove, cumin, black pepper, and coriander.

It was through research for this program that the author realized how divorced the Western use of garam masala differs from authentic uses of the spice. In Anglicized Indian dishes, garam masala is often used in conjunction with a few other spices like turmeric, cumin, and curry powder to make, well, mostly curry dishes. By contrast, mother-in-law Roshan Hirani of *Cooking With My Mother-in-Law* insists that garam masala should be added near the end of meat dishes, and is too powerful a flavor for vegetables, fish, and lentils.

There were some concessions made in choosing accessible recipes to include in this kit — attempting to negotiate the lines between simplicity, expensive gadgets, and authenticity. We have chosen to highlight Urvashi Pitre’s famous butter chicken recipe that utilizes an Instant Pot, and a simple flavored popcorn recipe from Martha Stewart. By exploring recipes that feature garam masala, we hope to pique the interest in Indian flavor profiles and offer avenues for further reading and eating. The world is so very large; what a gift it is to discover and taste all that its people have to offer.

# Instant Pot Butter Chicken

Urvashi Pitre, TwoSleevers.com

INITIAL RECIPE

- 1 14-oz. canned tomatoes
- 5-6 garlic cloves
- 1-2 teaspoons minced ginger
- 1 teaspoon turmeric
- ½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon garam masala
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1-pound boneless, skinless chicken thighs (add 1-2 minutes to cook time if using frozen)

TO FINISH

- 4 oz. butter cut into cubes
- 4 oz. heavy cream
- 1 teaspoon garam masala
- ¼ - ½ cup chopped cilantro

Place all ingredients into an Instant Pot in the order listed — EXCEPT for the butter, cream, and second teaspoon of garam masala — and mix the sauce well before placing the chicken on top of the sauce. If using frozen chicken, push it into the sauce a bit so it defrosts better.

Close the cooker and set for 10 minutes on high, and let it release pressure naturally for 10 minutes. After that, release all remaining pressure.

Open the pot and remove the chicken carefully. Blend together all the ingredients in the pot, preferably using an immersion blender. Add the butter, cream, cilantro, and garam masala and stir until well incorporated. It's best to let the sauce cool just a little before adding the butter and cream. The sauce should be thick enough to coat the back of a spoon; if too thin, stick it in the fridge for a little bit. Then take out half the sauce and freeze for later or store in the fridge for 2-3 days.

Add the chicken back in and heat through. Break it up into smaller pieces if you need, but don't shred it.

Serve over rice or zucchini noodles.

# Sweet-and-Spicy Popcorn

“An adult alternative to sweet kettle corn or caramel corn.”

Martha Stewart, [MarthaStewart.com](http://MarthaStewart.com)

## RECIPE

1 ½ teaspoons granulated brown sugar  
¾ teaspoon coarse salt  
1 teaspoon garam masala  
¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper  
2 tablespoons vegetable oil  
½ cup popcorn kernels ⅛

Combine the sugar, salt, garam masala, and cayenne in a large serving bowl.

Heat oil in a large pot over medium-high heat until hot but not smoking. Add popcorn and cover. Cook, shaking frequently, until corn has finished popping. Add to bowl, and toss.