

Cooking Ingredients

Agar - A tasteless dried seaweed that is used as a thickening agent. Sold in blocks, powder, or stands. Agar can be used in place of gelatin, but less is required. Also called "kanten" and "Japanese Gelatin."

Anise - A small annual plant from the parsley family was used as far back as 1500 B.C. The leaves and the seeds have a distinctive sweet licorice flavor. Used to flavor a number of confections and savory dishes.

Arrowroot - The root of the tropical arrowroot plant. This tuber is dried, ground, and used as a thickening agent for puddings, sauces, and other foods. It has about twice the thickening power of wheat flour. Also called arrowroot flour.

Aspartame - A sugar substitute that is said to be 180 times sweeter than sugar. Aspartame, which is synthesized from two amino acids, breaks down and loses its sweetness when it is heated.

Aspic - A savory jelly made of clarified meat, fish, or vegetable stock and gelatin. Most aspic is clear, but tomato aspic (made from tomato juice and gelatin) is opaque. Clear aspics form the base for molded dishes or as a glaze for cold dishes.

Baking Soda - Baking soda ("bicarbonate of soda") is a leavener used in baked goods. When mixed with an acid ingredient (such as butter-milk, yogurt, or molasses), baking soda produces carbon dioxide bubbles that make the dough rise.

Baking Powder - A leavener containing baking soda, an acid (such as cream of tartar) and a moisture-absorber (such as cornstarch). Double-acting baking soda releases carbon dioxide gas when it becomes wet and again when exposed to oven heat.

Balsamic Vinegar - An Italian vinegar made from white Trebbiano grape juice. This fine vinegar gets part of its flavor from aging in wooden barrels over a period of years.

Basil - An herb with a pungent flavor described as a cross between licorice and cloves. The ancient Greeks called this member of the mint family the "royal herb." Most varieties have green leaves, but one variety, the opal basil, is purple.

Bay Leaf - Also called laurel leaf or bay laurel, this aromatic herb is native to the Mediterranean. Turkish bay leaves are milder than the California variety. Used to flavor soups, vegetables, and meats. Normally removed before serving.

Borage - This European herb has a flavor similar to that of cucumber. Both the flowers and leaves are used in salads. The leaves are also used to flavor teas and vegetables.

Bouillon - A flavor-concentrated powder of dehydrated beef, chicken or vegetable stock. Dehydrated bouillon must be dissolved in a hot liquid before using.

Brown Sugar - White sugar combined with molasses. The darker the brown sugar, the more molasses that is used.

Buckwheat - Normally thought of as a cereal, buckwheat is actually an herb. The triangular seeds are used to make buckwheat flour which is used in pancakes and other baked goods.

Butterscotch - Butterscotch flavor is a blend of butter and brown sugar.

Cane Syrup - Thick, extremely sweet syrup made from the sugar cane. Used in Caribbean and Creole cooking.

Capers - These are the sun-dried, then pickled buds of a bush native to the Mediterranean. Capers make a pungent addition to many sauces and condiments, including tartar sauce.

Caraway Seed - The aromatic seed of an herb in the parsley family with a flavor described as a cross between aniseed and fennel. Used to flavor cheese, breads, cakes, stews, meats, vegetables and the liqueur "Kümmel."

Cardamom - A pungent aromatic spice that is a member of the ginger family. Widely used in Scandinavian and East Indian cooking. A little of this spice goes a long way.

Carob - The dried and roasted pulp of the tropical carob tree. After it is ground to create carob powder, it is used to flavor baked goods and candies. Because it tastes somewhat like chocolate, it is sometimes used as a chocolate substitute.

Cayenne Pepper - A hot red pepper powder made chiefly from the dried ripe pepper *Capsicum frutescens*. While very hot to most people, it is not as hot as chili pepper, which is sometimes sold as cayenne. Also called "red pepper."

Celery Seed - The seed of the wild celery called "lovage," most of which is grown in India. Because of its strong flavor, it should be used sparingly. Used in soups, salads, and meat dishes.

Celery Salt - A seasoning composed of celery seed and salt.

Chantilly Creme - A French term that refers to dishes that are served or prepared with whipped cream. Creme Chantilly is a lightly sweetened whipped cream that is sometimes flavored with vanilla or a liqueur.

Chervil - A mild, aromatic herb of the parsley family. It can be used like parsley, although its delicate flavor is diminished when boiled.

Chicory - An endive relative with curly, slightly bitter leaves that are used in salads or

cooked as greens. "Radicchio" is the red-leafed Italian chicory. "Succory," a coffee substitute, comes from the roasted, ground chicory roots.

Chikuwa - A variety of Japanese fish paste cake.

Chili Pepper - Any of over 200 varieties of hot pepper. They vary from mild to blistering hot and make very powerful seasonings.

Chili Powder - A seasoning mixture of dried chilies, garlic, oregano, cumin, coriander, and cloves.

Chinese Parsley - A plant native to the Mediterranean and the Orient. It is related to the parsley family and is valued for both its leaves and its seeds--both of whose flavors bear no resemblance to each other.

Chinese Parsley Seed - The seed of the Chinese parsley, also called "cilantro" and "coriander." They are mild and have an aroma similar to a cross among lemon, sage, and caraway. Used in baking, curry blends, pickling, special drinks, and soups.

Chinese Parsley Leaves - This pungent herb, also called "cilantro" and "coriander," is used in highly seasoned foods. Although it is purported to be one of the world's most popular herbs, Americans and Europeans find it to be an acquired taste.

Chives - A fragrant herb with slender, hollow green stems and a mild onion flavor. Chives are related to onions and leeks.

Chocolate - A preparation made from cocoa seeds that have been roasted, husked, and ground. Chocolate today is often sweetened and flavored with vanilla. Aztec king Montezuma drank 50 goblets a day in the belief that it was an aphrodisiac.

Chowchow - A mustard-flavored relish of vegetables and pickles. Chowchow is believed to have been brought to America by Chinese railroad workers.

Chutney - A spicy condiment containing fruit, vinegar, sugar, and spices. Chutney can range from mild to hot and is often used as an accompaniment to curried dishes.

Cilantro - A plant native to the Mediterranean and the Orient. It is related to the parsley family and is valued for both its leaves and its seeds--both of whose flavors bear no resemblance to each other.

Cilantro Leaves - This pungent herb, also called "Chinese parsley" and "coriander," is used in highly seasoned foods. Although it is purported to be one of the world's most popular herbs, Americans and Europeans find it to be an acquired taste.

Cinnamon - This spice comes from the inner bark of a tropical evergreen tree. Ceylon cinnamon is buff-colored and has a mildly sweet flavor. Cassia cinnamon is dark red and

is stronger in flavor. Cassia is the most common U.S. variety.

Clove - This spice is the dried, unopened flower bud of the tropical evergreen clove tree.

Cocoa - The fruit of the cocoa plant. These beans are fermented, dried, roasted, cracked, and ground. After extracting half the fat, it is again dried into unsweetened cocoa. "Dutch cocoa" is treated with alkali to neutralize acidity.

Coconut Water - The opaque white liquid in the unripened coconut that serves as a beverage for those living near the coconut palm.

Coconut Cream - Coconut cream is made by combining one part water and four parts shredded fresh or desiccated coconut meat and simmering until foamy. The coconut is then discarded. Used in recipes, particularly those in curried dishes.

Coconut Milk - Coconut milk is made by combining equal parts water and shredded fresh or desiccated coconut meat and simmering until foamy. The coconut is then discarded. Used in recipes, particularly those in curried dishes.

Coriander - A plant native to the Mediterranean and the Orient. Coriander is related to the parsley family of herbs. Coriander is valued for both its leaves and its seeds--both of whose flavors bear no resemblance to each other.

Coriander Leaves - This pungent herb, also called "cilantro" and "Chinese parsley," is used in highly seasoned foods. Although it is purported to be one of the world's most popular herbs, Americans and Europeans find it to be an acquired taste.

Corn Syrup - This is a syrup derived from cornstarch. It comes in dark and light varieties. Light syrup has been clarified and decolorized. Dark syrup has a stronger flavor. Both are used for desserts, frostings, candies, jams, and jellies.

Cream of Tartar - A natural fruit acid in the form of a fine white powder derived from a crystalline deposit found inside wine barrels. Used as the acid in some baking sodas. Also used in frostings, candies, and as an egg white stabilizer.

Cress - Any of various plants belonging to the mustard family, especially the watercress, which has a pungent-tasting leaf. Used for salads and as a garnish.

Cumin - This spice is a member of the parsley family and dates back to the Old Testament. Also called "cumino." Its nutty-flavored seeds are used to make curries, chili powders, and Kümmel liqueur.

Dextrous Sugar - This type of sugar is produced from grape or corn sugar. Also called "grape sugar" or "corn sugar."

Dijon - Originally from Dijon, France, this pale variety of mustard is known for its sharp,

clean flavor that can range from mild to hot. It is made from brown mustard seeds, white wine, unfermented grape juice and a variety of seasonings.

Dill - A hardy, aromatic herb that has been cultivated for thousands of years. Marketed in two forms: dill weed, which is the dried leaves; and dill seed, the dried seeds of the herb. Dill was a symbol of good luck for first-century Romans.

Dock - Any of several varieties of the hardy perennial herb from the perennial herb from the buckwheat family. The most strongly flavored variety is "sour dock." The mildest form is "dock sorrel," also known as "herb patience dock."

Endive - This salad green is related to the chicory. Belgian endives are grown in darkness and never turn green. Curly endive has curly leaves and a slightly bitter taste. Escarole is the mildest variety of endive.

Escarole - Escarole is a variety of endive with broad, slightly curved leaves. It has a milder flavor than Belgian or curly endive.

Fennel - An aromatic plant from the carrot family. Florence fennel, also called "finocchio," is eaten raw and in salads. Common fennel is the plant that produces fennel seeds. Italian (or Sicilian) fennel features stalks that can be eaten raw.

Filbert - This nut is also known as the "hazelnut" or "cobnut." Used whole, chopped, and ground in baking, candies, desserts, and salads.

Finnocchio - A variety of fennel that is eaten raw and in salads. Also called "Florence fennel."

Flan - A round pastry tart that contains either a sweet (custard or fruit) filling or a savory (vegetable, meat, or savory custard) filling. The pastry is cooked in a special flan ring on a baking sheet.

Fondant - This is a mixture of sugar, water, and cream of tartar cooked to the "soft-ball" stage. This mixture is cooled, then beaten and kneaded until pliable. Used both as a candy and as an icing.

Fructose - A natural byproduct of fruits and honey. More water-soluble than glucose and sweeter than sucrose with half the calories. Can be used by diabetics.

Garlic - A hardy bulbous plant related to leeks, chives, onions, and shallots. A powerful seasoning that can be used with almost any non-sweet dish. Garlic remains in the body and affects the breath and even the skin's odor.

Gelatin - An odorless, tasteless, and colorless thickening agent that forms a jelly when dissolved into hot water then cooled. Used in jellied desserts, salads, and cold soups. Available in both flavored and unflavored varieties.

Gherkin - The young fruit of a small variety of dark green cucumbers grown especially for pickling. The French call this pickle "cornichons."

Ginger - A tropical plant cultivated for its root. The flavor is peppery and sweet, the odor is spicy. Used to flavor candy, soups, meat, poultry, curries, gingerbread, and cakes. Also the chief flavoring agent for ginger ale.

Glucose - Glucose is a sugar. The most common form of this sugar is called "dextroglucose"--commonly referred to as "dextrose." Corn syrup is a form of glucose made from cornstarch.

Grape Leaves - The large green leaves of grapevines. These leaves are often used in the Middle East to wrap foods, such as "dolmas," for cooking. Also called "vine leaves."

Grenadine - A brilliant scarlet non-alcoholic syrup made from the juice of pomegranates. Used to color and flavor drinks and desserts. Called "grena dine" because was originally available only from the island of Grenada in the Caribbean.

Ground Allspice - Comes from the pea-sized berry of the evergreen pimiento tree, native to the West Indies and South America. Named "allspice" because it tastes somewhat like a combination of cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves.

Ground Pepper - The result of grinding peppercorns, the berries of the pepper plant. Ground pepper is the world's most popular spice. (Salt is not a spice--it's a mineral.) Ground pepper stimulates gastric juices and aids in digestion.

Ground Mace - Mace is a spice made from the membrane that covers the nutmeg seed. Tastes like a stronger, more aromatic version of nutmeg.

Gumbo Filé - A seasoning and thickening agent made from the young leaves of the sassafras tree. Originated from the Choctaw Indians who lived in Louisiana prior to the settlers' arrival. Used to make the creole specialty "gumbo."

Honey - The thick, sweet liquid made by honey bees from the nectar of flowers. In general, the darker the color of the honey, the stronger the flavor. Honey is the oldest sweetener known.

Horseradish - The pungent root of the horseradish tree. Used in sauces and as a condiment to meat and fish. Horseradish has been used since long before Christian times; it is one of the five bitter herbs of the Jewish Passover festival.

Iodized Salt - Table salt to which sodium iodine has been added. This additive is a preventative for hyperthyroidism ("goiter").

Japanese Gelatin - A tasteless dried seaweed that is used as a thickening agent. Sold in blocks, powder, or stands. Agar can be used in place of gelatin, but less is required. Also

called "agar" and "kanten."

Japanese Horseradish - A horseradish that is dried, powdered, and made into a pale green paste with an extremely potent flavor. Often mixed with soy sauce and served with sushi, sashimi, and other Japanese specialties. Also called "wasabi."

Kamoboko - A variety of Japanese fish paste cake.

Kanten - A tasteless dried seaweed that is used as a thickening agent. Sold in blocks, powder, or stands. Agar can be used in place of gelatin, but less is required. Also called "agar" and "Japanese Gelatin."

Kome-Kogi - Miso made from rice.

Lactose - Also called "milk sugar," lactose is that sugar that occurs naturally in milk. It is less sweet than any of the other sugars. Used in baby formulas and candies.

Licorice - A plant whose root provides an extract that has long been used to flavor confections and medicines. "Licorice" also refers to candy that has been flavored with licorice extract.

Mame-Kogi - Miso made from soy beans.

Maple Sugar - Sugar made from the sap of the sugar maple. It is sold loose or pressed into cakes or decorative molds.

Maple Syrup - A syrup made by boiling the sap of the maple tree until it has the consistency of syrup. Boiled longer, it becomes "maple honey." Longer still, and it becomes maple cream or butter. When cooked long enough, it becomes maple sugar.

Marinade - A highly seasoned liquid in which foods are soaked. Marinating foods permits them to absorb the flavor of the marinade. Most marinades contain an acid of some sort (lemon juice, vinegar, wine) which aid in tenderizing meats.

Marjoram - A culinary herb from the mint family with a mild, sweet sage-like flavor. Used to flavor meats and stews.

Marshmallow - An American confection made from sugar, gelatin, corn syrup, gum arabic, and flavoring. Some add egg whites for additional fluffiness. Marshmallows used to be made from the sweetened extract of the roots of the marshmallow plant.

Meat Tenderizer - Most chemical meat tenderizers are a powder composed chiefly of "papain," an enzyme extracted from papayas. This enzyme is effective in breaking down the meat fibers.

Meringue - A mixture of stiffly beaten egg whites and granulated sugar.

Mint - The two most popular types of the over 30 varieties of mint are peppermint and spearmint. Peppermint is more pungent. Mint is used in both savory and sweet dishes.

Miso - A paste of fermented soybeans used as a flavoring agent in much of Japanese cuisine. Generally, the lighter the color, the milder the flavor. Miso is easy to digest and is extremely nutritious.

Molasses - A thick brown syrup that is separated from raw sugar during the refinement process.

Mole - A rich, dark reddish-brown Mexican sauce that is often served over poultry. Mole contains onion, garlic, chili peppers, ground seeds, and a small amount of Mexican chocolate.

Monosodium Glutamate - Known as "MSG," this natural white flavor-enhancing amino acid was isolated from seaweed in 1908. Some people experience allergic reactions to MSG, producing dizziness, headache, facial pressure, etc.

Mugi-Kogi - Miso made from wheat.

Mustard - Any of several culinary herbs grown for its acrid seeds. Mustard seeds can be ground into a powder that can be prepared into a table condiment containing mustard, sugar, vinegar and turmeric (which gives it its bright yellow color).

Non-Iodized Salt - Ordinary table salt to which sodium iodine has not been added.

Nonpareil - A tiny colored sugar pellet used to decorate cakes, cookies, candies, etc. The name also refers to a confection that is covered with these pellets. In France, it means "without equal" and often refers to small pickled capers.

Nopal - The Prickly Pear cactus. Nopales are the fleshy leaves ("paddles"). These leaves are pale to dark green and feature a delicate, slightly tart flavor similar to that of green beans.

Nutmeg - The spice of the nutmeg tree. The lacy membrane around the seed, when dried and powdered, is the spice we call "mace." The mild, sweet flavor of nutmeg is used in cream dishes and fruit desserts. Also sprinkled on custards and eggnog.

Okara - The ground-up byproduct that results from the production of tofu.

Onion Salt - A mixture of onion powder and salt.

Oregano - A popular culinary herb of the mint family with a flavor similar to that of sweet marjoram or thyme. Also called "wild marjoram." Oregano is not quite as sweet and has a stronger flavor than marjoram.

Paprika - A seasoning powder made by grinding dried red or bell pepper pods. The flavor ranges from mild to hot, the color from orange-red to bright red. U.S. supermarkets carry the mild paprikas; try ethnic shops for stronger varieties.

Parsley - A highly peppery herb related to anise, dill, celery, and carrots. Used to flavor soups, meats, fish, cream and cheese sauces, eggs, breads, butter, marinades, and salads. There are more than 30 varieties of this herb.

Pectin - A thickening agent used in the preparation of jams, jellies and preserves. Pectin is found in a variety of ripe fruits and vegetables.

Pickle - A food that has been preserved in vinegar or a seasoned brine. Commonly pickled foods include cucumbers, pearl onions, cauliflower, baby corn, pig's feet, watermelon rind, and herring. Flavors include dill, sweet, and sour varieties.

Pickling Spice - A blend of seasonings used to flavor pickles, including varying combinations of allspice, bay leaves, cardamon, cinnamon, cloves, coriander, ginger, mustard seeds, and peppercorns.

Pico de Gallo - A topping made from fresh tomatoes, onions, and hot peppers.

Purslane - A garden herb with a reddish green stem, thick leaves, yellow flowers, and a mild acidic fatty flavor. Purslane is used in salads, used as a potherb in soups and gumbos, and can also be eaten raw. Also called "pussley."

Raw Sugar - The residue left after sugar cane has been processed to remove molasses and refine the sugar crystals. Because raw sugar contains contaminants such as molds and fibers, it is (in the US) purified.

Rennet - An extract from the stomachs of calves and lambs which contains the enzyme rennin, which is used to curdle milk in foods such as cheese and junket.

Rose Hip - The ripe reddish-orange fruit of the rose that is often used to make jellies, jams, syrups, teas, and wines. Because of their high vitamin C content, rose hips are dried, ground, and sold in health-food stores.

Rosemary - This highly aromatic herb from the mint family has a flavor that some describe as a cross between lemon and pine. Used in dressings, fruit salads, soups, vegetables, meats, fish, egg dishes, stuffings.

Saccharine - This sugar substitute contains 1/8 calorie per teaspoon and is said to be about 400 times sweeter than sugar. Some feel that saccharine has a bitter aftertaste. There is also controversy as to whether or not it is a carcinogen.

Saffron - The dried stigmas from the tiny blossom of the small crocus, *Corcus satirus*.

Also called "vegetable gold," saffron is the world's most expensive herb because it takes 4,000 to 5,000 hand-picked stigmas to produce an ounce of the herb.

Sage - There are over 500 varieties of this herb that are prized for their aromatic bitter flavor. Used to season pork, cheese, beans, stuffings, and sausages.

Salt - The mineral "sodium chloride." Most of today's salt comes from mines left by dried salt lakes. Used as a flavoring agent in many foods. Because of its value as a preservative, salt was a vital commodity to early civilization.

Salt Substitute - A substitute for salt that contains little or no sodium. Used by persons on a salt restricted diet.

Savory - A strongly flavored herb of the mint family. There are two varieties: winter and summer. The summer savory is slightly milder, but both should be used carefully. Savory has a flavor reminiscent of a cross between thyme and mint.

Sea Salt - Salt produced by evaporating sea water. Salt produced in this manner is more expensive than salt that has been mined.

Sorghum Syrup - The stalks of the cereal grass sorghum can be boiled down to produce a thick syrup which can be used as a table syrup and to sweeten baked goods. Also called "sorghum molasses."

Sorrel - Any of several varieties of the hardy perennial herb from the buckwheat family. Also known as "dock." The most strongly flavored variety is "sour dock." The mildest form is called "dock sorrel," also known as "herb patience dock."

Sugar Substitute - Also called "non-nutritive sweeteners," sugar substitutes are used by persons with reasons for avoiding or restricting their intake of sugar. "Saccharin" and "aspartame" are two common sugar substitutes.

Tapioca - A starchy substance derived from the root of the "cassava plant" that is used as a thickening agent for soups, fruit fillings, and desserts. Used much like cornstarch.

Tarragon - A distinctive, aromatic perennial herb often called "French tarragon." Used in butter, chowders, juices, marmalades, fish, poultry, meat, soups, vegetables, and sauces such as "béarnaise." A little of this spice goes a long way.

Teff Flour - The flour produced by grinding the seeds of the teff, a northern African grass cultivated for its seeds.

Tempeh - A fermented soybean cake used in Indonesian cooking.

Thyme - Two popular members of this mint family herb are "garden thyme" and "wild thyme." Both varieties are used widely in cooking and to season vegetables, meats,

poultry, fish, soups, and sauces. It is the key ingredient to "bouquet garni."

Tofu - A low-calorie, high-protein, cholesterol-free food made from curdled soy milk. It is creamy white with a sliceable firmness that varies from soft to firm. Tofu should be kept refrigerated: the water it is packed in should be changed daily.

Tostada Shell - A flat, crisp-fried flour or corn tortilla shell. This serves as the base upon which tostadas are created by adding refried beans, shredded chicken or beef, lettuce, tomatoes, cheese, sour cream, guacamole, and other ingredients.

Tumeric - A slightly bitter spice taken from the root of a plant in the ginger family. Usually available ground, this spice is used to flavor baked goods, curries, fish, poultry, gravies, salads, and dressings.

Turbinado Sugar - A raw sugar that has been steam-cleaned. The coarse crystals are blond in color and have a delicate molasses flavor.

Vinaigrette - A basic oil-and-vinegar dressing that includes salt and pepper. More elaborate variations include herbs, shallots, onions, mustard, and spices.

Vinegar - A weak solution of acetic acid and water used in pickling, preserving, tenderizing, and to add a sour flavor to foods. Cleopatra dissolved a perfect pearl in vinegar and drank it in front of Mark Antony as a demonstration of her wealth.

Wasabi - A Japanese horseradish that is dried, powdered, and made into a pale green paste with a sharp, pungent, extremely potent flavor. Often mixed with soy sauce and served as a condiment to sushi, sashimi, and other Japanese specialties.

White Pepper - White peppercorn is somewhat less pungent than the black variety. After ripening, its skin is removed and the berry is dried. White pepper is used in light-colored sauces and dishes where black speckles could be unaesthetic.

White Chocolate - Not a true chocolate at all. It is, rather, a blend of sugar, cocoa butter, milk solids, lecithin and vanilla. If a product does not contain cocoa butter, it isn't "white chocolate."

Won Ton Skin - Paper-thin round or square sheets of dough made from flour, eggs, and salt. Used as wrappers to make "won tons" and egg rolls. Won tons are small dumplings of thin dough around a minced mixture of meat, seafood, and/or vegetables.

Yakidofu - Grilled tofu (soybean curd cake).

Yeast - A single-celled organism that breaks its food down into alcohol and carbon dioxide in a process known as "fermentation." Brewers capitalize on the alcohol. Carbon dioxide gives beer and champagne effervescence and causes bread to rise.

Zabaglione - An ethereal dessert made by whisking egg yolks, Marsala wine, and sugar over simmering water to convert the eggs into a foamy custard. Called "Sabayon" in France.

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