

Fluvanna County Public Library

Spice of the Month Club

Black Pepper

Black pepper, nicknamed as 'black gold' and the 'king of spices', is the most important and widely consumed spice in the world. Pepper has grown in India for thousands of years and was first introduced to the West after the global conquests of Alexander the Great (4th century BC). Pepper was so precious in ancient times that it was used as money to pay taxes, tributes, dowries, and rent. It was weighed like gold and used as a common medium of exchange. In AD 410, when Rome was captured, 3,000 pounds of pepper were demanded as ransom.

Pepper was used in ancient Roman cuisine and became a status symbol of fine medieval European cookery. In fact, pepper was so popular in Europe that it helped fuel the age of exploration (AD 15th century). For centuries, pepper was only grown in a small region of India (Malabar), and throughout history different cultures held a monopoly on the trade (Arabs, Venetians, Portuguese, and British). In an attempt to establish direct trade with Indian pepper plantations, Christopher Columbus inadvertently stumbled upon the Americas and consequently mislabeled the native inhabitants as "Indians". It is interesting to note that a completely unrelated species (chili peppers from the Capsicum family) are referred to as "red pepper". Chili peppers, which are native to the Americas, were originally introduced to Europe as a substitute for black pepper due to their pungent flavor (1).

Dried, ground black pepper is one of the most common spices in Western cuisine. Usually referred to simply as "pepper", it can be found on nearly every dinner table in many parts of the world, often alongside table salt. Because pepper has a relatively low moisture content, it can be stored for many years without losing its flavor and aroma (especially when in its whole peppercorn form).

Black Pepper adds flavor to almost every food of every nation in the world. It is used in rubs, spice blends, salad dressings, and peppercorn blends. Pepper features prominently in several Arabic spice mixtures such as zhoug, baharat, and berebere. In Indian cooking, it is a component of garam masala and in France it is a main constituent of quatre épices (along with cloves, nutmeg, and dried ginger). In the United States, a combination of dried lemon and black pepper called "lemon pepper" is a popular seasoning for fish.

Black pepper is available whole, cracked, and ground but gourmet cooks prefer freshly ground peppercorns. Many savory dishes can be finished with freshly ground black pepper from a pepper mill. A coarse grind is desirable for dishes such as pepper-crusted steak. Larger amounts of peppercorns can be ground using a spice mill. The flavor of black pepper mellows with cooking. That is one reason why the pepper shaker on the table is so important. A dash of ground pepper, applied as each diner prefers, will perk up any cooked meal.

Black pepper is a staple in most American kitchens, but white pepper is more popular in French, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Swedish cooking. Use care when substituting one for the other as the American palette is not always used to the stronger 'musty' type flavor typical of white pepper.

More than just a food flavor enhancer, black pepper offers health benefits thanks to its bioactive compounds, with piperine being the most important. Piperine is a natural alkaloid that gives black pepper its pungent taste. It is also the main component that gives black pepper its health-boosting qualities.

Piperine is considered a type of antioxidant that helps to lower the risk of chronic illnesses like atherosclerosis, cardiovascular disease, and neurological conditions. This compound has a positive effect on nutrient bioavailability as well. When you add black pepper to your meal, you increase the amount of nutrients absorbed into your bloodstream.

- **Digestion and Intestinal Health** - Black pepper helps to stimulate hydrochloric acid in your stomach so you can better digest and absorb the foods you eat. It has carminative properties too, which help to reduce discomfort and gas buildup in your intestines.

- Immune Support - A strong immune system is important for helping you avoid illness, and black pepper can help here as well. Its active compounds have a role in boosting white blood cells, which your body uses to fight off invading bacteria and viruses.
- Black pepper is also a source of the following vitamins and minerals: Vitamin K, Vitamin E, Vitamin A, Thiamine (B1), Riboflavin (B2), Pantothenic Acid (B5), Vitamin B6, Manganese, Copper, Iron, Calcium, Phosphorus, Potassium, Selenium, Zinc, and Chromium.
- Black pepper is a good source of manganese, a mineral that can help with bone health, wound healing, and metabolism. In fact, one teaspoon of black pepper offers 13 percent of your daily recommended intake (DRI) of manganese and 3 percent of your DRI of vitamin K.

Whenever possible, grind your own pepper from peppercorns when preparing a meal. Eating freshly ground black pepper gives you more health benefits than eating pre-ground black pepper.

Ground Beef and Peppers Skillet

- 1 onion, chopped
- ½ red bell pepper, chopped
- ½ green bell pepper, chopped
- ½ yellow bell pepper, chopped
- 2 tsp minced garlic
- ½ tsp dried oregano
- ½ tsp dried basil
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 can diced tomatoes
- 2 cups beef broth
- ¾ cup rice
- 1½ cups shredded cheddar cheese



1. Begin by gathering all your ingredients. Chop the onion and the red, green, and yellow bell peppers into small, bite-sized pieces. Mince the garlic if you haven't already.
2. In a large skillet over medium-high heat, add the ground beef, chopped onion, and bell peppers. Cook them together, stirring frequently until the vegetables have softened and the beef is completely browned. This should take about 5-7 minutes. If there is excess fat, carefully drain it from the skillet.
3. Add the minced garlic, dried oregano, dried basil, and a generous pinch of salt and pepper to the skillet. Stir everything together and let it sauté for another 30 seconds. This step enhances the flavors, allowing the spices to bloom and meld with the meat and vegetables.
4. Stir in the can of diced tomatoes, ensuring to include all the juices, which add great flavor to the dish. Pour in the beef broth and then add the rice. Stir everything together to make sure the rice is evenly distributed and covered by the liquid.
5. Bring the mixture to a light boil. Once it starts boiling, reduce the heat to a simmer. Cover the skillet with a lid and let it cook for about 20 minutes. The goal is to cook the rice until it's tender and has absorbed most of the liquid.
6. After 20 minutes, check the rice to ensure it's cooked through. If it is, sprinkle the shredded cheddar cheese evenly over the top of the skillet. Cover the skillet again and let it cook for a few more minutes until the cheese has completely melted and is gooey and delicious.
7. Once the cheese has melted, your Ground Beef and Peppers Skillet is ready to serve. Spoon generous portions onto plates and enjoy the medley of flavors and textures. This dish pairs wonderfully with a simple green salad or some crusty bread to mop up any delicious juices.
8. NOTES:
 - Vegetarian Version: Use a plant-based ground meat substitute or additional veggies like zucchini and mushrooms. Substitute beef broth with vegetable broth.

- Rice Alternatives - Brown Rice: For a healthier option, use brown rice. Note that it will require a longer cooking time and possibly more liquid. Quinoa or Couscous: These can also be used, adjusting cooking times and liquid amounts accordingly.
- Cheese Choices - Different Cheeses: Swap out cheddar for mozzarella, Monterey Jack, or even a spicy pepper jack for added kick.

<https://recipecs.com/ground-beef-and-peppers-skillet/>

Black Pepper Chicken Recipe

- ½ lb. chicken breast, cut into very thin slices
- ½ tsp. ginger, minced
- 1 tsp. soy sauce
- ¼ tsp. sesame oil
- ½ tsp. black pepper
- A pinch of baking soda
- 1 tbsp. oil
- 1 tbsp. garlic, minced
- 2 scallions, chopped (white and green parts separated)
- 1 medium onion, cubed
- ½ green bell pepper, cubed
- Salt, to taste
- 1 tsp. black pepper



Sauce:

- 2 tbsp. soy sauce
- 1 tbsp. water
- 1 tbsp. oyster sauce
- 1/2 tsp. sesame oil

1. In a small bowl, combine the chicken slices, ginger, 1 tsp. soy sauce, ¼ tsp. sesame oil, ½ tsp. black pepper, and baking soda. Mix well and let it marinate for 30 minutes.
2. In another small bowl, whisk together the 2 tbsp. soy sauce, water, oyster sauce, and ½ tsp. sesame oil. Set aside.
3. Heat a large skillet over high heat and add 1 tbsp. oil. When the oil is hot, add the chicken and spread it evenly. Cook for 2 to 3 minutes without stirring, then flip and cook for another 2 to 3 minutes or until golden and cooked. Transfer the chicken to a plate and keep warm.
4. In the same skillet, heat another 1 tbsp. oil over high heat. Add the garlic, scallion whites, onion, and bell pepper and stir-fry for about 1 minute or until crisp-tender.
5. Add the chicken back to the skillet with the sauce mixture, salt, and 1 tsp black pepper. Toss everything well to coat and cook for another minute or until the sauce is slightly thickened.
6. Sprinkle the scallion greens on top and serve hot with cauliflower rice or your favorite keto side dish.

<https://ketorecipeshop.com/black-pepper-chicken/>

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Philly Cheesesteak Pasta Skillet (Serves 4-6)

- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cubed ;
 - salt, to taste;
 - pepper, to taste;
 - 1 red bell pepper julienned
 - 1 yellow bell pepper julienned,
 - 1 yellow onion sliced;
 - 2 tbsp. sesame oil, divided;
 - 3 garlic cloves, minced;
 - 1 tbsp. fresh ginger, minced;
1. Cut the onion and bell peppers into strips.
 2. Cut the chicken into cubes. Season with salt and pepper.
 3. Heat 1 tbsp. sesame oil in a large skillet or wok over medium-high heat. Cook the chicken cubes until golden brown. Transfer to a plate.
 4. Pour 1 more tbsp. of sesame oil, and sauté the minced ginger, and garlic until fragrant.
 5. Add bell peppers and onion. Cook for 5-10 minutes until soft.
 6. Return the cooked chicken to the skillet. Cook for 2-3 additional minutes.
 7. In a small bowl, mix soy sauce, rice vinegar, cornstarch, coconut sugar, honey, black pepper, and chili pepper flakes until well combined and the sugar dissolves.
 8. Pour over the chicken and vegetables. Cook until the sauce thickens, stirring occasionally.
 9. Turn off the heat. Sprinkle with sesame seeds and green onions. Enjoy!

<https://topteenrecipes.com/black-pepper-chicken-recipe/>



Chicken Zucchini Bake (2-4 servings)

- 8 ounces boneless chicken
 - 4 ounces fresh mushrooms
 - 1 medium zucchini
 - 2 Tablespoons butter
 - Salt and fresh ground black pepper, to taste
 - 2 cups shredded Italian cheese blend
 - ½ cup sour cream
 - 2 green onions
 - 2 eggs – large or jumbo (beaten)
 - 2 teaspoon dried basil
1. Preheat the oven to 375 F.
 2. On a cutting board, dice the chicken into bite-sized cubes.
 3. Slice the green onions, mushrooms, and zucchini. Cut the zucchini slices into halves or quarters.
 4. Melt the butter in a large pan on medium heat.



5. Add the chicken, zucchini, mushrooms, salt and pepper to the frying pan. Cook and stir often, until tender, about 5 minutes. Drain in a colander.
6. In a bowl, mix together the cheese, sour cream, green onions, beaten eggs, basil, salt, and black pepper, until well combined.
7. Stir in the chicken, zucchini and mushrooms until well coated.
8. Spray two 18.6 ounce individual baking dishes with non-stick spray. Click for 18.6 ounce oven safe baking dishes.
9. Pour the chicken and cheese mixture into the two dishes, divided evenly.
10. Bake 30-35 minutes.
11. Allow to cool 5 minutes before serving.
12. Serve hot dishes on top of pot holders or trivets to protect the table or counter top.

<https://zonacooks.com/chicken-zucchini-bake-low-carb-recipe-two/>

Pioneer Woman Marinated Tomatoes (18 servings)

- 1 cup (240 mL) Olive Oil (for a richer flavor, you can use extra virgin)
- 1/4 cup (60 mL) Aged Balsamic Vinegar
- 4 tbsp. (50g) Sugar
- 1 tsp (5g) Salt
- Freshly Ground Black Pepper, to taste
- 3 Green Onions, thinly sliced
- 1/4 cup (15g) Fresh Parsley, chopped
- 18 Basil Leaves, chiffonade (cut into thin strips)
- 1/4 tsp (1.25g) Ground Thyme
- 3 cloves Garlic, minced (2 for the marinade, 1 for the bruschetta)
- 2 lb (900g) Ripe Firm Tomatoes, cut into quarters if large, halves if small
- 1 whole Baguette, sliced for bruschetta



1. Prepare the Marinade: In a large glass bowl, combine the olive oil, balsamic vinegar, sugar, salt, black pepper, sliced green onions, chopped parsley, basil leaves, ground thyme, and 2 cloves of minced garlic. Whisk together until the sugar and salt are completely dissolved.
2. Marinate the Tomatoes: Add the tomatoes to the bowl with the marinade. Gently toss to ensure all tomato pieces are well coated. Let the tomatoes marinate for at least 3 hours, and up to 6 hours, at room temperature to enhance their flavors. Avoid marinating longer to prevent the tomatoes from becoming too soft.
3. Prepare the Bruschetta (Optional): If using leftover marinated tomatoes, preheat a grill pan or skillet over medium heat. Lightly brush the baguette slices with olive oil and grill them until golden brown. Rub each slice with the remaining whole garlic clove for added flavor.
4. Assemble the Bruschetta: Top the grilled bread slices with marinated tomatoes, allowing some of the marinade juices to soak into the bread for extra flavor.
5. Serve: Enjoy the marinated tomatoes as a flavorful side or atop the freshly made bruschetta. Serve immediately for the best taste.

<https://delishsides.com/pioneer-woman-marinated-tomatoes/>

Tex Mex Chicken and Zucchini Recipe

- 1 lb. boneless & skinless chicken breasts cut into 1" pieces
- 2 large zucchini diced
- 2 medium bell peppers chopped
- 1 medium onion finely chopped
- 3 large garlic cloves minced
- 1 cup corn frozen or fresh
- 1 tbsp. oil for frying
- 14 oz. can low sodium black beans drained & rinsed
- 14 oz. can low sodium diced tomatoes not drained
- 1 tsp. store bought or homemade taco seasoning
- 1 tbsp. cumin divided
- 1 tsp. salt
- Ground black pepper to taste
- 1 cup Tex Mex or Colby Jack cheese shredded
- ½ cup green onions chopped
- ½ cup cilantro chopped



1. Preheat large (12 inch) deep skillet on low – medium heat and swirl oil to coat. Add onion, garlic and bell pepper; sauté for 3 minutes, stirring occasionally.
2. Move vegetables to the side of the skillet and add chicken. Sprinkle with 1 tsp cumin, salt and black pepper. Cook for about 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.
3. Add corn, beans, tomatoes, zucchini, taco seasoning and remaining cumin. Stir, cover and cook on low-medium for 10 minutes.
4. Sprinkle with cheese, cover and cook for a few minutes or until cheese has melted. Top with green onion and cilantro.
5. Serve hot, on its own or with brown rice or quinoa. Or as a garnish, feel free to add sour cream, cilantro and black olives after the cheese was melted. Top with crushed tortilla chips. Use as filling in low carb wraps, garnished with sliced avocado.

https://ifoodreal.com/chicken-and-zucchini/?utm_medium=social&utm_source=pinterest&utm_campaign=tailwind_tribes&utm_content=tribes&utm_term=362344014_11605296_267507

Black Bean and Corn Salsa

- 14.5oz can of black beans, drained and rinsed
- 14.5oz can of corn kernels, drained (or frozen corn - thawed, drained)
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes, diced
- 1 medium green bell pepper, diced
- ½ cup red onion, finely diced
- ½ cup Italian dressing
- ¼ cup fresh cilantro, roughly chopped
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin



- Salt and pepper, to taste

1. Add all ingredients to a large mixing or serving bowl. Toss to combine. Adjust salt and pepper to taste.
2. Serve immediately with tortilla chips or chill until ready to serve.

<https://wonkywonderful.com/black-bean-and-corn-salsa/>

Chocolate-Black Pepper Cookies (4 dozen)

- 1 ½ cups all-purpose flour
- ¾ cup unsweetened Dutch-process cocoa powder
- ¼ tsp. coarse salt
- ¼ teaspoon finely ground pepper, plus more for sprinkling
- 1 tbsp. + 1 tsp. good-quality instant espresso powder
- ½ tsp. ground cinnamon
- ¾ cup (1 ½ sticks) unsalted butter, softened
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 large egg
- 1 ½ tsp. pure vanilla extract
- Coarse sanding sugar, for rolling



1. Sift together flour, cocoa powder, salt, pepper, espresso powder, and cinnamon into a large bowl; set aside.
2. Put butter and granulated sugar in the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment; mix on medium speed until pale and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Mix in egg and vanilla. Reduce speed to low. Add flour mixture; mix until just combined.
3. Turn out dough onto a piece of parchment paper, and roll into a 2-inch-diameter log. Roll log in the parchment. Refrigerate at least 1 hour or overnight.
4. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Remove log from parchment paper. Let soften slightly at room temperature, about 5 minutes. Roll log in sanding sugar, gently pressing down to adhere sugar to dough. Transfer log to a cutting board, and slice into 1/4-inch-thick rounds. Place rounds on baking sheets lined with parchment paper, spacing 1 inch apart. Sprinkle each round with freshly ground pepper.
5. Bake cookies until there is slight resistance when you lightly touch centers, about 10 minutes. Transfer cookies to wire racks to cool completely. Cookies can be stored in airtight containers at room temperature up to 2 days.

<https://www.marthastewart.com/315946/chocolate-black-pepper-cookies>

Black Pepper Chocolate Chip Cookies (2 dozen)

- 1 cup unsalted butter, softened
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- ½ cup golden brown sugar
- 1 large egg
- 1 tablespoon finely ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract
- ½ teaspoon salt



- 2¼ cups all-purpose flour
- ¼ teaspoon baking soda
- 2½ cups semisweet chocolate chips

1. Set oven and prep baking sheets. Preheat the oven to 375°F, and line a couple of baking sheets with parchment paper. Set aside.
2. Make batter. In a large mixing bowl, combine the softened butter with the sugars and mix until it's smooth. Then add the egg and mix until it's evenly incorporated.
3. Add the pepper, vanilla, and salt and mix to combine.
4. Add the baking soda to the flour, and gradually mix this into the batter. Mix only until you no longer see any dry areas of flour.
5. Fold in the chocolate chips.
6. Shape. Then use a 2-inch cookie scoop to shape the batter into cookies, adding them to the parchment-lined baking sheets as you go. They should have at least 2 inches between them, about 8 per sheet.
7. Bake. Place the baking sheets in the preheated 375°F oven until the cookies are golden brown along the edges, about 12 minutes.
8. Cool. Let them cool on the baking sheet for about 5 minutes, then place them on a cooling rack to cool completely.
9. Repeat with the remaining cookie batter, until it's all gone.

<https://cookingontheweekends.com/kampot-black-pepper-chocolate-chip-cookie-recipe/>

Deviled Egg Salad (Yields 2 cups)

- 6 large eggs
- ¼ cup mayo
- 2 to 3 tsp. Dijon mustard
- ¼ cup diced celery
- ¼ cup seeded and diced red bell peppers
- 2 Tbsp. thinly sliced scallions
- ¼ tsp. Salt
- Ground black pepper to taste

Place the eggs in a saucepan with cold water to cover and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to a simmer and cook for 10-12 minutes. Pour off the boiling water, cover with cold water, and crack the shells to facilitate peeling. Set aside.

While the eggs cook, combine the mayo, mustard, celery, bell peppers, scallions and salt in a bowl. When the eggs are cool enough to handle, peel and coarsely chop them. Add them to the dressing mixture and stir gently to combine. Season with black pepper to taste. Serve immediately or chill.

[Moosewood Restaurant Favorites Cookbook](#) (641.5636 MOO) page78

Library Resources

Essential Spices and Herbs by Christina Nichol – 641.6383 NIC

Flour water salt yeast by Ken Forkish – 641.815 FOR

Homemade Condiments by Jessica Harlan – 641.33 HAR

Salt, fat, acid, heat: the four elements of good Cooking by Samin Nosrat – 641.523 NOS

Spiced – 641.6383 AME