

# Did You Know?

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## Allspice, *Pimenta dioica*

- Allspice is the dried unripe berry (botanically a drupe) of the evergreen *Pimenta dioica* tree.
- The common name allspice comes from the flavor that resembles a combination of cloves, cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger and black pepper.
- Other common names include: Jamaican pepper, pimento, myrtle pepper, newspice or Turkish Yenibahar.
- The tree, *Pimenta dioica*, is native to the tropical forests of West Indies, southern Mexico and South and Central America.
- Commercially, allspice is primarily grown in Jamaica, and is also grown in Mexico, Honduras, Trinidad and Cuba.
- Allspice is used in both sweet and savory cooking, including desserts, Caribbean jerk seasoning, curry powders, sausage, barbeque sauce, pickling liquid, and Cincinnati-style chili.
- Allspice is found in the French liqueurs Benedictine and Chartreuse. It is also an ingredient in mulled cider and Christmas wassail.
- The berries are harvested green and unripe, traditionally dried in the sun and sold whole or ground.
- Whole allspice berries have a longer shelf life than ground, which is about 6 months.
- Fresh leaves from the allspice tree can be used by infusing their flavor then removing them before serving, much like bay leaves.
- In spite of their common names, Carolina allspice (*Calycanthus floridus*), Japanese allspice (*Chimonanthus praecox*) and wild allspice (*Lindera benzoin*) are unrelated to allspice (*Pimenta dioica*).
- The compounds in allspice, quercetin, gallic acid and ericifolin have been studied for use in treatment of chronic disease and cancer.
- Allspice oil is often used to add fragrance to men's toiletry products. This goes back to the Napoleonic War of 1812 when Russian soldiers put allspice in their boots to keep their feet warm and odor-free.

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