

# Fluvanna County Public Library

## Spice of the Month Club

### Berberere Spice Blend

**Flavor Profile:** spicy, sweet, and slightly citrusy.

**(Ingredients: Coriander, Fennel, Fenugreek, Ajowan, Paprika, Salt, Citric Acid)**



Pronounced ber-beray, the Berbere Spice Blend is a popular spice mix and key ingredient in the cuisines of Ethiopia and Eritrea. An interesting thing to consider about Berbere Spice Blend is that, though it is synonymous with Ethiopian and Eritrean cooking, none of the key ingredients in this mix actually are native to that part of the world.

The ingredients in Berbere Spice, like Indian curry, vary from kitchen to kitchen. With its bold combination of paprika, ginger, and a variety of other spices, it delivers a profile that's both spicy, sweet, and slightly citrusy.

Traditionally used to season the various lentil stews called wats, it can also be used as a rub on chicken and lamb. Berbere has a wonderful flavor affinity with tomato, so try it in your favorite recipes for tomato based soups or chili. For an extra layer of flavor, mix it with oil or water to create a paste, perfect for dipping bread or coating grilled vegetables, fish, and poultry.

Beyond its culinary significance, Berbere embodies a rich tapestry of cultural symbolism and traditions within Ethiopian society. This vibrant spice blend is more than just a seasoning; it represents a connection to heritage, a symbol of hospitality, and a celebration of community. In Ethiopia, the preparation of Berbere is often a communal activity, bringing families and neighbors together, reinforcing social bonds, and passing down culinary knowledge through generations. Moreover, its presence in meals signifies the importance of sharing and unity, with dishes seasoned with Berbere frequently served during important gatherings and ceremonies. Thus, Berbere stands as a testament to the Ethiopian ethos of communal living, embodying the spirit of cooperation, family values, and the richness of their cultural customs.

Berberere's rise in popularity can be attributed to the growing appreciation of global cuisines, driven by increased cultural exchanges and the accessibility of international ingredients. Its rich, complex flavor profile enhances dishes, offering a taste of Ethiopian tradition while encouraging culinary innovation.

### **Berberere (Ethiopian Spice Blend) (18 servings)**

- 2 tsp. coriander seeds
- 1 tsp. cumin seeds
- ½ tsp. fenugreek seeds
- 1 tsp. black peppercorns
- 2 whole allspice berries
- Seeds of 4 green cardamom pods
- 4 cloves
- 5 dried red chilies, seeds and membranes removed and broken into small pieces (see Note)
- 3 Tbsp. sweet paprika
- 1 tsp. turmeric
- 1 tsp. kosher or sea salt
- ½ tsp. ground ginger



- ¼ tsp. nutmeg
  - ¼ tsp. cinnamon
1. In a heavy skillet over high heat, toast the whole spices (seeds) and chilies, shaking the pan regularly to prevent scorching, until very fragrant, about 3 minutes. Transfer to a bowl and let cool completely.
  2. Grind the cooled spices in a spice or coffee grinder. Add all remaining ground spices and salt and grind everything together.
  3. Store in an airtight container in a dark, cool place. Will keep for up to 3 months.
  4. Note: If you aren't afraid of extreme heat, leave the membranes and a few of the seeds in while de-seeding the chilies.

<https://www.daringgourmet.com/berbere-ethiopian-spice-blend/>

### Roasted Carrots with Berbere Spice Recipe (4 servings)

- 1 lb. carrots peeled and cut into bite sized pieces
- 1 tbsp. olive oil
- 1 tbsp. butter cut into 4-6 pieces
- ½ tsp. berbere spice
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. pepper
- 1 tsp. parsley optional; minced as garnish



1. Preheat your oven to 400F. Peel and cut the whole carrots into pieces that are as close to the same size as you can get them.
2. Place carrots on a roasting tray then drizzle the olive oil over the carrots. Add the cut-up pieces of butter on top of the carrots and then add the spices. Stir to coat the carrots with the spices and the oil and spread the carrots out in a single layer as best you can so that they are not crowding each other. (You could also combine all of the ingredients in a small bowl and then add them to your roasting tray.) Roast the carrots for 20-30 minutes or until the carrots are fork tender. Toss them ½ way through roasting.
3. Taste the carrots and add additional seasoning if desired then garnish with minced parsley if you like.

<https://explorecookeat.com/roasted-carrots-with-berbere-spice-recipe/>

### Creamy Ethiopian Berbere Chicken Curry (6 servings)

- 1 pound boneless - skinless chicken thighs, cut into 1/2" pieces
- 2 tbsp. avocado oil
- 1 yellow onion - finely diced, 2 cups
- 1 clove garlic - minced
- 1 tbsp. minced fresh ginger
- 2 tbsp. berbere spice mix - to taste, see notes
- 1 cup tomato sauce - plain not seasoned
- 1 can coconut milk - full fat, 13.66 oz
- 5 cups spinach - roughly chopped, 5 ounces
- 1 tsp. sea salt - or salt to taste



1. Prep all the ingredients before you begin cooking. Preheat a 9-10" skillet over medium-high heat. When the pan is hot, add 1 tablespoon of the avocado oil along with the chicken. Sauté until the chicken is beginning to brown and is mostly cooked, 4-5 minutes.
2. Remove the chicken from the pan and set it aside. Then add the remaining 1 tablespoon avocado oil to the pan along with the onion, garlic, and ginger.
3. Sauté over medium-low heat for 3-4 minutes, or until the onions are beginning to turn translucent. Add the berbere spice mix and stir to combine before adding the tomato sauce and coconut milk.
4. Bring the curry to a boil, then reduce the heat and simmer until thickened and the flavors meld about 10 minutes.
5. Add the chicken back to the pan along with the spinach. Pile the spinach over the top of the curry, and let the heat of it simmering wilt the spinach for about 1 minute before starting to mix it in. This helps the spinach not to go overboard!
6. Once the spinach is just wilted, 2-3 minutes, season to taste with sea salt and serve immediately! Leftovers reheat well on the stovetop.
7. NOTES: Berbere spice mixes vary greatly in heat. If you're not sure, taste yours, and you can always add less to be sure it's not too spicy.
8. Tip: You can save back 1-2 tablespoons of coconut milk to drizzle over the top of the finished curry for a nice presentation!

<https://getinspiredeveryday.com/food/ethiopian-berbere-chicken-curry/>

### **Ethiopian-Inspired Red Lentil Soup (6 servings)**

- 1 large onion chopped
  - 1 pound potatoes cut into 1/2-inch chunks
  - 1 ¼ cup red lentils picked over and rinsed
  - 3 cups water
  - 2 garlic cloves chopped
  - 2-3 tbsp. berberé spice
  - 1 28-ounce can crushed tomatoes
  - 1 pound green beans fresh or frozen, cut into bite-sized pieces
  - 1-2 cups water
  - salt to taste
  - 3-4 cups fresh spinach
1. Mix the ingredients for the Berbere Spice Mixture. This recipe makes enough for several batches of soup. Do not add it all to the soup!
  2. Sauté the onion in a non-stick pan until it starts to brown. Add the potatoes, lentils, 3 cups water, garlic, and spice mixture. Simmer, covered, over low heat until lentils are tender, about 20 minutes.
  3. Add the tomatoes, green beans, and enough additional water to create a thick soup. Check the seasoning, adding salt and more of the spice mixture if needed, and cook for about 15 more minutes.
  4. Just before serving, stir in the spinach. Serve immediately. Makes 6-8 servings.



<https://blog.fatfreevegan.com/2006/11/ethiopian-inspired-red-lentil-soup.html>

## Berbere Spiced Chicken, Carrots and Chickpeas (4 servings)

- ¾ cup diced yellow onion
- 3 garlic cloves
- 1 cup fresh cilantro, stems and leaves separated and roughly chopped, divided
- 1 tbsp. + ¾ tsp. berbere seasoning
- 1 tbsp. + ¾ tsp. honey
- 1 tbsp. tomato paste
- 1½ tbsp. apple cider vinegar, divided
- 3 tbsp. olive oil, divided
- ¾ tsp. kosher salt, plus more, to taste
- ¼ tsp. freshly ground black pepper, plus more, to taste
- 5 carrots, peeled and cut diagonally into 1½" pieces
- 1 (15 oz.) can chickpeas, rinsed and drained
- 4 skin-on, bone-in chicken thighs (about 2 pounds)
- 1 orange

1. Preheat oven to 425 degrees.
2. Combine the onion, garlic, cilantro stems, berbere seasoning, honey, tomato paste, ½ tablespoon apple cider vinegar, 2 tablespoons olive oil, salt and pepper in a food processor and purée until smooth.
3. Place the carrots, chickpeas, chicken and onion mixture in a 9" square baking dish.
4. Remove rind from the orange. Supreme and roughly chop half of the orange; transfer to a small bowl and set aside. Squeeze the juice from the other half of the orange and add to baking dish along with ¼ cup water; toss to coat.
5. Nestle the chicken, skin side up, between the carrot and chickpea mixture. Cover with foil and bake for 30 minutes. Remove foil and bake uncovered for 40 more minutes, rotating dish halfway through, or until the vegetables are tender and the chicken is cooked through.
6. Remove from the oven and let sit for 10 minutes. Meanwhile, add cilantro leaves, remaining 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar and remaining 1 tablespoon olive oil to bowl with prepared orange. Season with salt and pepper and stir to combine.
7. Arrange chicken and carrot and chickpea mixture on a serving platter. Top with orange mixture.

<https://www.twoofakindcooks.com/berbere-spiced-chicken-carrots-and-chickpeas/>



## Ethiopian Spiced Almonds (12 servings)

- 1 ½ tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tbsp. berbere
- ½ tsp. kosher salt
- freshly cracked black pepper, to taste
- 12 ounces whole almonds

1. Preheat your oven to 300°F.
2. Meanwhile, heat oil in a medium saucepan. Once warm, add the berbere, salt and pepper and stir to combine. Let the spices warm and permeate the oil, about 3-5 minutes.
3. Remove from the heat and add the almonds. Stir well, to coat the almonds with the spiced oil.



4. Pour the almonds onto a parchment or Silpat lined baking sheet, and roast for 12 minutes.
5. Remove the almonds and transfer them to a cooling rack to dry. Let dry for at least 2 hours before serving.

<https://bigflavorstinykitchen.com/launch-party-ethiopian-spiced-almonds/>

### **Berbere-Spiced Red Lentil Hummus (4 servings)**

- 1 ¼ cup red lentils (picked over and rinsed)
- 3 cups water
- 2 large cloves garlic , peeled
- 1 tbsp. tahini (optional, but good)
- 1 tbsp. lemon juice
- 1 ½ tsp. berberé seasoning, or to taste
- salt to taste (optional)



1. Put the lentils and water in a medium saucepan and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer, covered, until the lentils are soft, about 20-30 minutes. Check often and add water if it seems dry.
2. Drain all water from the lentils. Put them and all remaining ingredients into the food processor and blend until smooth. Check seasonings and add more lemon juice, berberé, and salt. Transfer to a covered bowl, sprinkle with chopped chili peppers, if desired, and serve chilled or at room temperature.

<https://blog.fatfreevegan.com/2012/07/berbere-spiced-red-lentil-hummus.html>

### **Ethiopian-Style Scrambled Eggs (Serves 2-3)**

- 2 tbsp. (30ml) Olive Oil
- 1 small (~115g) Onion, chopped
- 1 small (~115g) Red Bell Pepper, diced
- 2 Jalapeño Peppers, seeded and diced
- 1 tbsp. Ethiopian Berbere spice blend (adjust to taste)
- 1 tsp. Kosher Salt (adjust to taste)
- 6 large pasteurized Eggs
- 2 tbsp. Ethiopian Kibbeh or regular Butter
- For Serving: 3 servings of Injera or any choice of Bread (optional)



1. Chop onion and both peppers; place them in large skillet or non-stick frying pan. Add 2 tablespoons of olive oil and set aside until you are ready to cook.
2. Crack the eggs into a bowl and beat them well with a fork or whisk. Add a pinch of salt and then set aside.
3. Turn on your stove to a medium heat and begin to mix the onion & peppers with the oil. Once the frying pan is hot and the oil begins to sizzle, the onions and peppers will release their natural juices. Continuously stir and sweat them until the juices have evaporated. This process is done when onions are soft and translucent without developing any color/browning.
4. Reduce the heat to low and add the Berbere to the sautéed vegetables. Stir well to combine and let it cook for about 1-2 minutes. Adjust the heat to avoid burning the seasonings.
5. Pour the beaten eggs into the frying pan with the spiced vegetable mixture. Stir continuously with a spatula, gently folding the eggs over as they cook. Cook until the eggs are just set but still slightly runny.

6. Remove the pan from the heat. Stir in the Ethiopian Kibbeh or butter into the scrambled eggs. The heat of the eggs will melt the butter and give a rich flavor.
7. Serve with Injera or any other choice of bread.

<https://plentifulblackbird.com/blogs/plentiful-recipes/ethiopian-style-scrambled-eggs>

### **Berbere Potatoes (4 servings)**

- 2 tbsp. olive oil
- 2 shallots, thinly sliced
- 4 garlic cloves, rough chopped
- 1 large tomato, diced (with juices)
- 1 tbsp. Berbere spice
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup water
- $\frac{3}{4}$  tsp. salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. pepper
- 1.5 lbs. thin-skinned potatoes, thinly sliced (yukons, red, etc)
- a drizzle of olive oil
- $\frac{1}{8}$  cup fresh flat-leaf parsley



1. Preheat oven to 400F
2. In a cast iron or oven-proof skillet, heat the oil over medium heat, add the shallots and saute, stirring until tender, 4-5 minutes. Add the garlic and cook 2 minutes, until fragrant. Add the tomatoes and their juices, and continue cooking until they begin to break down and soften, 3-4 minutes. Stir in the Berbere spice and the water.
3. Scoop out  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of the mixture and set aside.
4. Add the potatoes tossing to coat each side and layer them. Pour the remaining tomato mixture over top.
5. Cover tightly with a lid or with foil. Bring to a hard simmer on the stovetop, then place in the oven for 30 minutes covered.
6. Remove lid, checking that potatoes are fork-tender, drizzle with olive oil, bake an additional 10 minutes uncovered.
7. Scatter with fresh parsley. Enjoy!

<https://www.feastingathome.com/berbere-potatoes/>

### **Berbere Spiced Chocolate Bread Pudding (Servings 8-10)**

- 1 tbsp. butter
- 1 loaf (1 pound) mild sourdough bread, crusts removed
- 2 cups half and half
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup sugar
- 4 ounces dark chocolate (72% cacao), chopped
- $2\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. Berbere
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup cocoa powder, preferably Dutch-processed
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup milk
- 6 eggs
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. sea salt



- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
  - Powdered sugar, for dusting
  - For the spiced whipped cream
  - 1½ cups cold heavy cream
  - 2 tbsp. sour cream, mascarpone, or crème fraiche
  - 1 tbsp. sugar
  - ½ tsp korerima, ground to a powder (or substitute ¼ teaspoon ground cardamom seeds)
  - Sea salt
1. Preheat the oven to 325° F. Thoroughly butter the interior of a 2 quart or 9" x 13" baking dish and set it on a rimmed baking sheet (this makes transferring the filled casserole to and from the oven much easier).
  2. Cut the bread into 1½-inch cubes — if the loaf is sliced, tear or cut into 1½-to 2-inch pieces (either way, about 8 cups of bread cubes or pieces). Fill the baking dish with the bread.
  3. Put the half and half, sugar, chopped chocolate, Berbere, and cocoa powder into a large, heavy saucepan set over medium-low heat. Warm the mixture gently, stirring continually, just until the chocolate has melted. Remove the pan from the heat, continue stirring while slowly adding the milk. Whisk in the eggs one at a time, followed by the salt and vanilla extract.
  4. Pour the custard into the baking dish over the bread; use the back of a spoon to gently press on the bread, saturating it.
  5. Bake for 45 minutes. Let the bread pudding cool and set for about 20 minutes before serving.
  6. Make the spiced whipped cream - Put the heavy cream, sour cream (mascarpone or crème fraiche), sugar, korerima, and a tiny pinch of salt into a mixing bowl. Use a hand mixer to whip until the cream is pillowy with medium peaks.

[https://curiospice.com/blogs/recipe-library/berbere-spiced-chocolate-bread-pudding?srsltid=AfmBOop-6M99p7D3JE1Rvg\\_XhRrNpvlUISEo-8SJMDrQpy6PZZZnGssM](https://curiospice.com/blogs/recipe-library/berbere-spiced-chocolate-bread-pudding?srsltid=AfmBOop-6M99p7D3JE1Rvg_XhRrNpvlUISEo-8SJMDrQpy6PZZZnGssM)

### Berbere Caramel Cookie Recipe

- Dry: 2 cups all-purpose flour, 1 tsp baking soda, ½ tsp salt, 1 to 2 tsp Berbere spice (adjust to heat preference).
  - Wet: 1 cup unsalted butter (softened), ¾ cup brown sugar, ¾ cup granulated sugar, 2 eggs, 1 tsp vanilla extract.
  - Filling/Finish: 1 cup soft caramel bits (or wrapped soft caramels), flaky sea salt.
1. Whisk Dry Ingredients: In a medium bowl, combine flour, baking soda, salt, and berbere spice.
  2. Cream Butter & Sugars: In a large bowl, cream softened butter, brown sugar, and granulated sugar until light and fluffy (approx. 3 mins).
  3. Add Wet Ingredients: Beat in eggs one at a time, then add vanilla extract.
  4. Combine: Gradually blend the dry ingredients into the wet mixture until just combined.
  5. Chill: Cover and refrigerate for 30–60 minutes to prevent over-spreading.
  6. Stuff & Bake: Scoop dough, place 1-2 caramel pieces in the center, and roll into a ball so the caramel is completely enclosed.
  7. Bake: Preheat oven to 350F. Bake on a parchment-lined sheet for 10–12 minutes until edges are set but centers remain soft.



8. Finish: Immediately sprinkle with flaky sea salt while hot. Let cool on the sheet for 5 minutes before moving to a wire rack.

Instagram video from Mi'aawaa Bakery & Coffee Cart

### **Eritrean Beef Zigni (Serves 4)**

Eritrean Beef Zigni, a tomato-based stew that is the national dish of Eritrea. Eritrea is a country on the Red Sea in the Horn of Africa that is known for the kindness of its people and (unfortunately) for being at war for decades.



- 4 tbsp. olive oil, divided
- 1 lb. beef, cubed (stew cuts like chuck are best)
- 3 tsp. salt, divided
- 1 tsp. pepper
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, diced
- 1 tsp. ginger, diced
- 1 red bell pepper, de-seeded and sliced (optional)
- 2 tbsp. berbere
- 1 (14oz) can diced tomatoes
- 2 cups water
- Cilantro, leaves picked and chopped
- Fresh pita (or crusty) bread

1. Season the beef cubes with 2 tsp salt and 1 tsp pepper. Over Med-High heat, heat 2 Tbsp olive oil in a dutch oven, or flat bottom pot. Place the beef in the dutch oven, sear for 2-3 minutes each side. Remove from the pan and set aside.
2. In the same pot, heat remaining olive oil. Add onions then stir fry for 3- 4 minutes. Add garlic, ginger, and red bell peppers and stir fry for 2-3 more minutes. Add Berbere spice, and stir fry for 1 minute, until fragrant.
3. Add beef back to the pot with full can of tomatoes and water. Cover, bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer for 1 hour. After 1 hour, remove the lid and simmer for another 30 minutes, until the sauce is reduced.
4. Serve with fresh pita or crusty bread and garnish with cilantro!

[https://piquantpost.com/blogs/recipes/eritrean-beef-zigni?srsId=AfmBOop2peri7f3kmORNKNJTX\\_A84qSvKYYYRTRI76it\\_J9D7jTMzkOK](https://piquantpost.com/blogs/recipes/eritrean-beef-zigni?srsId=AfmBOop2peri7f3kmORNKNJTX_A84qSvKYYYRTRI76it_J9D7jTMzkOK)

### **Library Resources**

Cooking the African Way by Constance Nabwire – J 641.1 NAB

Essential Spices and Herbs by Christina Nichol – 641.6383 NIC

On the Curry Trail by Raghavan Iyer – 641.3384 IYE

Spiced by America's Test Kitchen – 641.6383 AME

Vegan Africa by Marie Kacouchia – 641.5636 KAC