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TOAST TO CINNAMON

Learn how to pair the familiar spice in unexpected ways.

PAIR IT

Cinnamon has an affinity for fruit, especially in savory dishes like lamb burgers or a lamb tagine, says Diane Gross, co-owner of Cork Wine Bar and Market in Washington, D.C.

"Brighter red fruit and berry notes enhance the spice, but keep away bitter notes," she says. "Beaujolais has notes of cherry, pomegranate and red apple that pair well with cinnamon. With darker blackberry fruit, Syrah also has a savory quality that complements warm spices."

And dessert? "The classic fall dessert is a warm apple or pear crisp with cinnamon, clove, nutmeg and brown sugar," says Gross. "Pair it with another classic, **2007 Royal Tokaji Wine Company Tokaji Aszú 5 Puttonyos.**"

The scent of cinnamon evokes home, hearth and holidays, with a spicy edge. As writer Vanna Bonta said, "cinnamon bites and kisses simultaneously."

Cinnamon lends subtle warmth and complexity to many dishes. Though it's associated with sweets here in America, it's used in savory applications around the world, from Mexican mole sauces and Moroccan tagines to Middle Eastern pilafs and Greek *moussaka*. It's also a key ingredient in Chinese five-spice and some Indian curries. Add a pinch to Bolognese sauce, roasted root vegetables, ratatouille, chicken soup, meat stews or burgers.

Most cinnamons in the U.S., including those labeled Korintje, Vietnamese or Saigon, are the cassia variety of the *Cinnamomum* genus. The Ceylon variety is more common in other parts of the world, sometimes called "true cinnamon." It has a thin, flaky texture and a more delicate, floral flavor. Look for it in Mexican markets (labeled *canela*) or online.

—Nils Bernstein

Cinnamon is the inner bark of the tree. It rolls into its scroll-like shape when dried in the sun.

Ancient Egyptians are said to have used cinnamon in their embalming process.

The word cinnamon comes from the Greek *kinnámōmon*, which means "sweet wood."

Cinnamon has powerful antibacterial and antifungal properties. It's been used in traditional medicine for thousands of years.

During the Roman Empire, cinnamon was said to be 15 times more valuable by weight than silver.