

# The spice is right in Seattle authors' recipes

By **T. Susan Chang** | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT SEPTEMBER 30, 2014

0 COMMENTS

I am often skeptical of spice books. Without a single theme or region to give them focus, they can be promising, but ultimately disorganized affairs. There are some chops, however, behind “World Spice at Home.” The authors are Amanda Bevill, owner of the Seattle shop World Spice Merchants, and Seattle-based author, former chef, and restaurant consultant Julie Kramis Hearne. Together they’ve produced a fresh, surprising collection of recipes that’s more than just a pretty scent.

Bevill and Hearne’s thoughtfulness is obvious in the 50 pages of front matter, a glossary not just of spices, but of blends and how and where they can be found and used. Although many of the basic ingredient combinations here are not new, the seasoning is rich and insightful.

To make corn chowder, it’s worth a splurge on fall chanterelles, for their meaty, buttery flavor to mingle with bacon and a harmonious handful of chopped fennel. The spice blend za’atar, sour with sumac and aromatic, adds a nice contrarian note.

Ras el hanout, if you make it from scratch, will drive you batty as you collect and grind 22 different spices (you also get it in Middle Eastern markets already blended). In grilled and honey-glazed eggplant, the floral-scented spices are blended with rosemary for a heady, decadent side. The blend is less effective in kale tabbouleh flecked with pomegranate.

Make your tablemates guess what five seeds go into crisp-edged, roasted fingerlings. They might get mustard seed and cumin, even fennel. But it’s the stinky, obscure ajwain (or bishops’ weed) and the oniony nigella that make it memorable. Harissa is a mouth-searing, brick-red paste, but here it’s an aggressive dry powder of assorted paprikas, Asian spices, and a surprising hint of caraway. When it’s added to fiercely roasted, lemony broccoli, the vegetable takes on the character of something crisp and dippable.



**Co-authors Amanda Bevill (left) and Julie Kramis Hearne.**

**WORLD SPICE  
AT HOME:**

# New Flavors for 75 Favorite Dishes

**Author:** Amanda Bevill and Julie Kramis Hearne

**Publisher:** Sasquatch

**Number of pages:** 240 pp.

**Book price:** \$24.95

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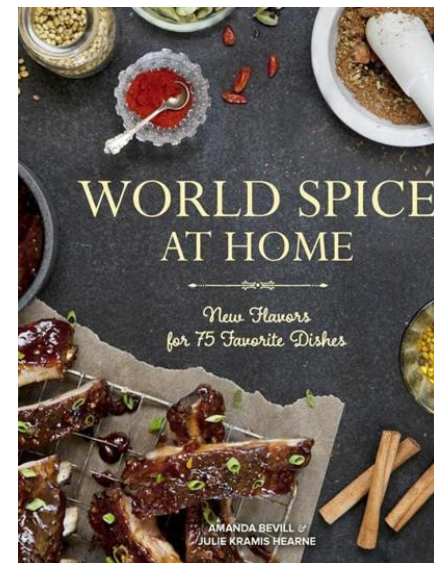
**Recipe for skillet shrimp with poudre de Colombo**

I'm stunned when a spice blend I've never heard of turns a skilletful of shrimp into one of my favorite recipes of the year. That eight-spice blend is "poudre de Colombo," from the French West Indies. The weirdest ingredients are fenugreek and uncooked rice. But it transforms the shrimp into something so clove-y and piquant, you want to suck the shells, and it turns fennel, which I don't always love, into a kind of glamorous caramelized root.

A peppery warm blend of baharat (also available in Middle Eastern markets) can step in when you're bored with salt and pepper on your steak. Every bite of a juicy rib-eye somehow seems new or intriguing against a backdrop of thyme-scented mushrooms.

My son declared pork ribs with five-spice powder "your best dinner in months," though between the ribs and the hoisin sauce, we were all smitten. You bake them in foil and broil for a glaze, and they tear apart at the touch of a fork (which you set aside after a minute anyway so you can get up close). Cornbread features crisp and butter-gilded crust on both sides, thanks to the marvelous trick of pouring half the butter over midway through the baking.

And just when you're stuffed and groaning, a peach cobbler, swimming with nutmeg, cardamom, and cinnamon, offers something you can't refuse: biscuit dough — dry ingredients folded with whipped cream — that bakes up airy and golden.



There are a few technical things I'd change about this book. I'd like a page number when a spice blend is called out mid-recipe. Cooking instructions are expressed in time ("cook 5 minutes"), with relatively few sensory cues to guide the way. Still, "World Spice at Home" is a fascinating journey, and like any traveler, I'm willing to put up with a little inconvenience as long as my appetite for wonder is sated in the end.

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