Sauces / Ethiopia

Berbere Spice Blend

Ethiopia's signature spice blend is built on dried chiles and fenugreek — the chile providing a warm, building heat and the fenugreek a distinct bitterness that anchors the sweetness of korarima cardamom and cinnamon into something ancient and complex. Ground fresh from whole spices and bloomed in a dry pan, it perfumes the entire kitchen in a wave that is both familiar and entirely its own.

Time 20 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 20 parts Dried red chiles (guajillo or New Mexico)
- ☐ 4 parts Fenugreek seeds
- ☐ 3 parts Korarima (Ethiopian cardamom) pods
- ☐ 3 parts Coriander seeds
- ☐ 2 parts Black peppercorns
- ☐ 1 parts Whole cloves
- ☐ 1 parts Ground cinnamon
- ☐ 1 parts Ground ginger
- ☐ 1 parts Fine sea salt

Let's make it.

01 Place all the whole spices (chiles, fenugreek, korarima, coriander, peppercorns, and cloves) in a dry skillet over medium heat. Toast, shaking constantly, for 2–3 minutes. This step is critical: each spice needs heat to volatilize its essential oils, but each spice also has a different tolerance for heat. Fenugreek in particular goes from fragrant to bitter in seconds — watch it carefully. The blend is ready when it smells warm, roasty, and complex, not when any single spice dominates.

02 Cool the toasted spices completely — hot spices will steam in the grinder and the moisture will clump the powder. Grind in a spice grinder or coffee grinder reserved for spices, in batches if necessary, to a fine powder. Add the pre-ground cinnamon, ginger, and salt and pulse to combine. Pass through a fine-mesh sieve to remove any unmilled hull fragments. Store in an airtight jar away from light. Use within 3 months for full potency — after that the heat fades first, then the aromatics.

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Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
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