



## The New Sugar & Spice: A Recipe for Bolder Baking

By Samantha Seneviratne

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**A 2016 James Beard Award nominee from New York-based food writer and author of the popular dessert blog *Love, Cake*.**

Raise your desserts to a whole new level of flavor with *The New Sugar & Spice*, a collection of more than eighty unique, unexpected, and uniformly delicious recipes for spice-centric sweets. Veteran baker Samantha Seneviratne's recipes will open your eyes to a world of baking possibilities: Her spicy, pepper-flecked Chile-Chocolate Truffles prove that heat and sweet really do go hand-in-hand, and a fresh batch of aromatic, cinnamon-laced Maple Sticky Buns will have the whole family racing into the kitchen.

Discover new recipes from around the globe, such as Sri Lankan Love Cake or Swedish-inspired Saffron Currant Braid. Or, give your classic standbys a bold upgrade, such as making Raspberry Shortcakes with zingy Double Ginger Biscuits. Filled with fascinating histories, origin stories, and innovative uses for the world's most enticing spices—including vanilla, cinnamon, peppercorns, and cardamom—*The New Sugar & Spice* guarantees that dessert will be the most talked-about part of your meal.

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## **The New Sugar & Spice: A Recipe for Bolder Baking** By Samantha Seneviratne Bibliography

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"Samantha Seneviratne has assembled the most beguiling collection of desserts, all of which hinge on the exotic spices she knows so well from childhood visits to her family's native Sri Lanka. The warmth and intensity of cloves, cardamom, and other spices breathe new life into many of our favorite sweet endings—as well as an array of desserts that might be quite fresh and new to the reader. The many beautiful photographs make this already stunning book even more so!"

—Deborah Madison, author of *Vegetable Literacy* and *The New Vegetarian Cooking For Everyone*

"Samantha Seneviratne has a fresh approach to what can feel like a tired niche — the baking book. She organizes her beautifully photographed cookbook by spice, so chapters are sorted by cinnamon, nutmeg, vanilla and so on. It's a different way to peruse — and be inspired by — a baking book. And tucked inside those chapters are approachable and creative takes on classic treats. "

—J.M. Hirsch, *Associated Press*

"This is a gorgeously imagined and photographed book with a warm-hearted spirit. Seneviratne's instructions are welcoming and informative. She offers well researched spice intel and clear baking cues."

—Editors, *Epicurious*

"The straightforward recipes are great for novice bakers (ahem, me) and also help use up spices that would otherwise be gathering dust. Plus, Seneviratne's Connecticut-by-way-of-Sri-Lanka stories about family are totally charming. And sugar-phobes are in the clear, too, since most of the recipes are pretty low in that department."

—Mallory Schultz, *Bon Appetit*

"With beautiful, understated photos, a history of each spice's production and use over the centuries, and lovely stories about Sri Lanka and Seneviratne's grandparents, *The New Sugar and Spice* is a baker's dream come true."

—Jessica Howard, *Shelf Awareness*

#### About the Author

SAMANTHA SENEVIRATNE is a New York-based food writer, recipe developer, and food stylist. She is a graduate of the International Culinary Center and has worked as a food editor in the test kitchens of *Good Housekeeping*, *Fine Cooking*, and Martha Stewart's *Everyday Food*. She blogs about dessert at *Love, Cake* (Lovecommacake.com).

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#### Introduction

About ten years ago, my big brother lived in a sixth-floor walk-up in Little Italy. We were very close, but we didn't talk about how much we loved each other. I don't know many brothers and sisters who do. But I think he knew. And I think the desserts helped.

If I close my eyes, I can still picture him bounding down the stairs to meet me at the front door of his apartment building. He'd run down with a big smile, curly hair tousled, and still in his pajama bottoms after a day spent furiously working on one of his graphic design projects from home. I never felt like climbing his stairs, but I often had deliveries for him. This time, I had made a towering chocolate cream pie the night before and I knew he would want a slice. At least, I knew I wanted to bring him one.

That was our ritual. I would experiment with desserts and Mohan would eat them—whatever the results. When I lived in Brooklyn and he lived in Manhattan, we would make the handoff over dinner at a restaurant near one of our offices. After the tonkatsu or the lasagna had been cleared away, Mohan would sneak bites of my latest triumph—a flaky plum galette, or maybe a custardy bread pudding—surreptitiously from under the table while we talked.

Sometimes, if we didn't have time for a meal, we'd just pick a convenient street corner. We didn't even need to talk much. Meet at Sixth Avenue and West Fourth Street, a kiss on the cheek, a quick transfer of cookie-filled Tupperware, and we'd be on our respective ways.

When I moved to the neighborhood next to his in Manhattan, I could just pop by his apartment anytime and meet him at the bottom of his stairs. My culinary school was just around the corner. On my way home from school, around 11:30 or midnight, I would call him up with a two-minute warning so he could run down to meet me to get something sweet.

After he died, I spent nights awake wondering if he knew how much he mattered to me. I'm sure I hadn't said the words enough. But handing him a big slab of pie or a stack of cookies felt like saying "I love you." I hope he heard me.

Homemade desserts have a big job: they carry important messages to important people. We bake them with the people we love. We share them with the people we love. We eat them with the people we love. But these days, we are told over and over again that one of the principal ingredients of dessert is deadly. The abundance of processed sugar in our diets is a serious health problem. Experts say that sugar is toxic. Some doctors claim that sugar should be grouped with cigarettes and alcohol as a harmful, addictive substance. Sugar has been linked to heart and liver damage, hypertension, and even cancer. Everyone knows that we eat too much of it. According to the American Heart Association, the average American consumes about twenty-two teaspoons of sugar a day. That's about thirteen more teaspoons than their recommended limit. If that's true, then it's no wonder so many of us are left wondering, *Should I bake with my children? Should I give sweets as holiday gifts? What should I serve to the people I love? What should we do about dessert?*

What's even worse is that all this sugar has defeated its own purpose. Too much sugar is causing not only a health crisis but also a deliciousness crisis. Our desserts have become boring, uninspired sugar-bombs, sweetness drowning out everything else that's good. The flood of sugar has diluted real flavor, muffled complexity, and concealed true richness. Too often these days our sweets are *merely* sweet, and sweetness is the only standard a dessert must meet.

My goal in writing this book was to answer the questions that were troubling me: How can we make desserts better? More delicious? Healthier? Better for sharing? How should we bake for the people we love?

How can we make the conclusion of meals more interesting, coffee breaks more exciting, and (dare I say?) life itself more satisfying? The answer was in my cupboard all along: spice!

To get somewhere new, I go back to the past. There was a time when sugar was not ubiquitous and all-

powerful, but instead was simply considered one of the spices people used to flavor their foods, satisfy their cravings, and enrich their lives. Before sugar became dominant, the very thought of cinnamon captivated imaginations, governed desires, and made tastes. The flavor and aroma of cloves drove trade, exploration, even war. According to legend, Eden had a scent—cinnamon, ginger, and nutmeg.

And so with *The New Sugar and Spice*, I wanted to explore a broader spectrum of complementary tastes and flavors, and to reimagine beloved classics as a more balanced blend of sugar and spice. In these recipes, I've tried to take down the sugar to bring up the flavor. I think that less sweet leaves more room for delicious. This book is about making dessert, and the love we share through it, that much more enjoyable and, in turn, a bit better for us, too.

Of course, these are desserts, and sugar is important to baking—not only for flavor but also for texture, color, and aroma. These aren't necessarily low-sugar desserts. But in each recipe, I've used what I believe to be just enough sugar necessary for the best possible experience. In some cases, that isn't very much. In others, it's more. My aim is to make spice an equal partner with sugar, open up a new world of homemade deliciousness, and create new cravings for something other than mass-produced sweetness.

The recipes themselves also tell stories—my own family stories. My parents are from Sri Lanka, the island that some thought held the Garden of Eden itself. I can believe it. Sri Lanka was once one of the most coveted islands on the planet thanks to its fertile land and cinnamon groves—it is the native home of true cinnamon, the species known as *Cinnamomum verum*. But not only cinnamon grows there. When I was growing up, I heard stories about my great-grandmother tending the clove trees that grew thirty feet tall outside her house in the mountains and produced bushels of spice to sell. My grandfather taught my dad how to hand-pollinate their vanilla orchids with a piece of coconut straw pulled from a broom. To me, Sri Lanka was a paradise and a home away from home. I spent some of the most joyful days of my childhood there, helping my grandmother's cook, Tikiri, gather spices from the garden and prepare steaming curries over fire and wood in an open hearth. Back in suburban Connecticut, where I grew up, I ate my fill of chocolate chip cookies, apple pie, and cinnamon buns, along with plenty of cake and brownies from mixes, happily indulging in all the sweet conveniences of my parents' chosen home. But in Sri Lanka, I realized food comes from the earth. There I learned how to eat with my hands and my heart.

The seeds of this book were planted in these distinct places many years ago and grew into an idea while I was working as a magazine food editor, recipe developer, and food stylist in New York City. The result is a tribute to the cozy desserts of my childhood, the American classics that we all know and love, plus a little hint of the exotic in the form of spice.

Now instead of just hankering for a sweet piece of cake, I'm drawn to the spices themselves. On a cold snowy day, something with the bright, spicy heat of ginger might call to me. I know that the smell of cardamom instantly brightens my mood, especially when it's cozied up to chocolate. When I have a heap of fresh summer fruit warming in the sun on my kitchen counter, I reach for cinnamon or vanilla, always crowd-pleasers. The pleasures of sugar and spice together have eclipsed my desire for simply sweet.

The recipes are organized by spice. Some desserts in a designated chapter might use more than one spice, but I've slotted these treats by the flavor that most defines them. If you want the toasty, lemony essence of nutmeg, you know where to turn. And when you're feeling adventurous, flip to the spices that you're less familiar with. Follow your cravings through the book and discover new ones along the way!

I have developed the recipes that follow to bring back to life the power of the spices that once drove global history, and to look for a new way forward. I hope they will make all your traditional favorites feel like new

discoveries. And most importantly, I hope you will be excited to share your creations, made with love and sugar and spice, with the people most important to you.

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### **spiced coffee custard**

Serves 4

2 cups heavy cream

1 cup whole milk

1 tablespoon freshly

grated nutmeg, plus more for sprinkling

4 large egg yolks

1/4 cup sugar

4 teaspoons instant espresso powder

Pinch of kosher salt

I started drinking coffee at a young age. The way Sri Lankans make it, with plenty of sugar and creamy milk, it had real kid appeal. Instead of giving me an entire cup, my dad would tip a little of his hot coffee into his saucer for me.

Like a caffeine-hungry kitten, I would slurp it up.

These puddings have all the same appeal as those saucers of coffee did back then. Cool, sweet, and smooth coffee-flavored custard with a hint of spice. If you want to be cheeky, you can use pretty ovenproof coffee mugs or teacups instead of ramekins.

Preheat the oven to 325°F. Have ready four 6- to 8-ounce ramekins set in a metal baking pan. Bring a kettle of water to a boil and set aside.

In a small saucepan, combine 1 1/2 cups of the heavy cream, the milk, and the nutmeg over medium-high heat. Cook until bubbles form around the edge of the pan, just before boiling, stirring occasionally. Remove the pot from the heat.

Whisk together the egg yolks, sugar, espresso powder, and salt. Add some of the hot cream mixture to the yolk mixture while whisking. Repeat this process a few times until the two are completely combined. Divide the custard mixture evenly among the ramekins. Add enough boiling water to come halfway up the sides of the ramekins. Cover the pan with aluminum foil and bake until the custards are just set but still jiggle when nudged, 25 to 30 minutes. (Keep an eye on them; you might have to take some out before the others are done.)

Use tongs to transfer the ramekins from the hot water to a rack to cool. Empty the baking pan of water and let cool. Set the ramekins back in the pan, wrap well with plastic wrap, and refrigerate at least 6 hours or up to 2 days. To serve, whip the remaining 1/2 cup of cream to soft peaks. Top each custard with some whipped cream and a sprinkle of nutmeg.

### **Users Review**

**From reader reviews:**

**Brent Cook:**

The book *The New Sugar & Spice: A Recipe for Bolder Baking* has a lot associated with on it. So when you make sure to read this book you can get a lot of help. The book was compiled by the very famous author. The writer makes some research prior to write this book. That book very easy to read you can find the point easily after looking over this book.

**Elliott Townsend:**

*The New Sugar & Spice: A Recipe for Bolder Baking* can be one of your basic books that are good idea. We all recommend that straight away because this reserve has good vocabulary that may increase your knowledge in vocab, easy to understand, bit entertaining but still delivering the information. The article author giving his/her effort to get every word into delight arrangement in writing *The New Sugar & Spice: A Recipe for Bolder Baking* although doesn't forget the main place, giving the reader the hottest and based confirm resource facts that maybe you can be among it. This great information can drawn you into brand-new stage of crucial considering.

**Phillip Chadwick:**

Your reading sixth sense will not betray a person, why because this *The New Sugar & Spice: A Recipe for Bolder Baking* guide written by well-known writer who really knows well how to make book which might be understand by anyone who have read the book. Written throughout good manner for you, dripping every ideas and producing skill only for eliminate your current hunger then you still question *The New Sugar & Spice: A Recipe for Bolder Baking* as good book not just by the cover but also with the content. This is one guide that can break don't evaluate book by its handle, so do you still needing a different sixth sense to pick that!?! Oh come on your examining sixth sense already alerted you so why you have to listening to a different sixth sense.

**Eugene Howard:**

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