

# Achiote Paste

*"Good annatto is the colour of fire"*

*~W.B. Yeats, Natural History, 1870.*



Achiote paste

Achiote Paste derives its bright red coloration from the use of crushed annatto seeds. The prepared paste can be found in many Latin American, Mexican, or Central American markets. The seeds come from the achiote tree (*Bixa orellana*), which is a short, shrubby tree native to Central America. It was used by the Mayans not only in culinary applications, but also as war paint. Even today, an estimated 70% of natural food colors are derived from it. Its vibrant color comes from compounds called carotenoids. This class of powerful antioxidants links the consumption of annatto to several potential health benefits; such as healthy eyes, better heart health, and reduced inflammation. It may also have antioxidant, anticancer, and antimicrobial properties.

## ***Ingredients:***

- 30 g (approximately  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup) annatto seed powder
- 6 g (approximately 1 tablespoon) whole coriander seed
- 3 g (approximately 1 teaspoon) whole black peppercorns
- 3 g (approximately 1 teaspoon) whole cumin seed
- 1 g (approximately 2 whole) cloves
- 1 g (approximately one small stick or  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon ground) cinnamon
- 1 g (approximately  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon ground) allspice
- 3 g (approximately 1 tablespoon) Mexican oregano
- 30 g (approximately five cloves) garlic, finely minced
- 50 mL (approximately  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup) orange juice
- 50 mL (approximately  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup) fresh squeezed lime juice
- 25 mL (approximately 2 tablespoons) neutral oil

## ***Directions:***

Place the annatto seed powder in a medium-size bowl. In a small nonstick skillet, add the whole coriander seed, whole black peppercorns, whole cumin seed, whole cloves, cinnamon stick, and allspice. Gently toast over medium heat. As soon as they warmed spices start to give off a lightly toasted aroma, remove from the heat. Place in a spice grinder until finally ground. Alternatively, you may use the measurements for pre-ground versions of the spice. Add in all the remaining ingredients and combine into a paste. Store in a refrigerator or freezer until needed. This recipe yields approximately 200 g of paste.



Achiote paste is the base for this Spicy Cochinita Pibil (Yucatan Slow Roasted Pork) taco