

Foodie Freak: The case against nutmeg

Contributed by Ross A. Christensen
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Hopefully by now readers will have become accustomed to my sense of humor, but while all of the facts you will read here are true, today's column is written in a very sarcastic attitude. Please keep your tongue planted firmly in your cheek as you read.

Nutmeg is evil. Call your congressman, congresswoman, congressbeast; we have to enact laws against nutmeg. Nutmeg "mules"; sometimes working under the guise of "spice importers"; need to be captured at the boarder and deported. (Please, don't really call your congressional representative ...)

Nutmeg has spent years quietly positioning itself into key areas of our culinary repertoire, and even a key part of many pharmaceuticals. Our recipes are defiled by its presence. Eggnog, baked goods, and even recipes for meatloaf — once pure and all-American — have all been sullied with nutmeg.

The pharmaceutical companies aren't interested in nutmeg for its flavor; they use it because nutmeg is a known antibacterial, natural preservative, and hallucinogenic! Myristicin is the active ingredient in the illegal drug called "Ecstasy" and is a major component in nutmeg. Elemicin is another compound found in nutmeg and is also a known hallucinogen.

Both Myristicin and Elemicin have chemical structures similar to Mescaline, another illegal drug. Nutmeg also contains a weak carcinogen called safrole, which has been named as a contributor to the overall incidence of cancer, so much so that it has been banned as a food additive by the Food and Drug Administration.

Nutmeg is considered by most authorities as a pseudo-hallucinogen. People who attempt to get high with nutmeg generally report that the negatives far outweigh the positives of abusing the "spice." Not only is nutmeg filled with dangerous hallucinogenic but in ancient Rome priests used nutmeg as incense in their depraved heretical worship rituals.

Small amounts (measured in teaspoons) of freshly grated nutmeg can cause dry mouth, euphoria, nausea, increased heart rate and feelings of impending doom. Moderate amounts can, in addition to the previous, cause hallucinations, dehydration, vomiting, stomach cramps and feelings of being disconnected from reality. And if a person consumes too much nutmeg, permanent psychosis can occur. If this weren't bad enough nutmeg is so toxic to the human body that if it is injected intravenously it causes DEATH!

Connecticut has the unofficial designation of "The Nutmeg State," a tradition which sprang from rumors that unscrupulous merchants carved nutmegs shapes out of wood and sold them as actual nutmegs.

A corresponding story tells of people who didn't understand the proper use of nutmeg that was being imported with sailors to Connecticut was to be grated into foods, but thought that nutmeg was cracked open like a nut and so believed they were swindled. When opened like a nut, nutmeg does resemble wood.

Some gamblers sprinkle nutmeg on gambling tickets for luck. Inmates in prisons have been known to sell nutmeg stolen from the prison kitchen for cigarettes and money. Upon discovery of this illicit trade, nutmeg is now banned from most prisons. Malcolm X wrote in his autobiography that before his conversion to Islam he paid for nutmeg in prison and it was better than marijuana.

Nutmeg is the seed pit of the tree *Myristica fragrans*. This seed pit is surrounded by a net-like covering called an arillus that is removed and then becomes the spice "mace." The mace is covered by a sweet pericarp (aka, fruit) that is made into candies and jams. The exterior fruit doesn't ship well, so it typically is only seen in the nutmeg's native areas of Indonesia, India and the Caribbean. Or is this just a great conspiracy for these cultures to enjoy the sweet fruit of their local trees and then ship the dangerous nutmeg to pollute our society?! Evil, I say, evil!

Small, damaged or worm-infested nutmegs are processed into nutmeg oil. The scent of nutmeg is strong so it should be used sparingly. It is said to resemble the fragrance of myrrh. Over 8,000 tons of nutmeg is shipped annually around the world. Nutmeg is also widely believed to be an aphrodisiac.

I, for one, do not want to have to worry about leaving nutmeg unlocked in my home. How do I protect my daughter from dealers pushing nutmeg on street corners?! With its grubby little hands in illegal drugs, prisons, gambling and non-Christian worship practices, how much longer can we afford to let nutmeg freely move through our culture!?

Don't even get me started on the evils of dill!

If you absolutely must use nutmeg, always use fresh ground.

Fairly Traditional Eggnog (with my own unique twists)

Ingredients: 2 large eggs 2 Tablespoons plain white sugar ½ cup heavy cream 1 or 2 shots of your favorite rum, brandy, or whiskey 1 dash of cayenne powder or tiny dash of hot sauce (you won't be able to taste it in the finish product but it acts as a natural flavor enhancer) Freshly grated nutmeg

Separate the two eggs, reserve the whites and put the two yolks in your favorite pickle jar, cover and shake until the yolks lighten in color. Add the sugar, cream, liqueur, hot pepper and shake a few moments until combined. Whip the egg white into soft peaks and then gently fold the egg yolk mixture into the whites. Pour into glasses and grate the nutmeg right on top of the drink.

Ross A. Christensen is an award-winning gardener and gourmet cook. He is the author of "Sushi A to Z, The Ultimate Guide" and is currently working on a new book. He has been a public speaker for many years and enjoys being involved in the community.

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