

Lightly Spiced Apricot Paste, for Saint André

I absolutely love the way this turned out, though it was admittedly different from what I'd set out to create. I'd been envisioning something fiery, with a noticeable kick, yet this paste has only the barest hint of spice. Ultimately it was serendipitous, as too much zing would have overwhelmed the delicate nature of the cheese.

4 ounces dried apricots (select the moistest ones you can find)

1/2 cup water

1-1/2 teaspoons sugar

One 2" piece fresh ginger, peeled, cut into fourths

3 allspice berries

3 whole cloves

3 black peppercorns

2 green cardamom pods, lightly smashed with a rolling pin or mallet

Combine all ingredients in a small saucepan over medium heat. Bring to a boil, reduce heat slightly and cook for about 10 minutes, or until all liquid is absorbed (but before the apricots are completely dry). Remove from heat.

Scrape into a shallow bowl and cool to room temperature, about 10 minutes. Use a small spoon to dig out the papery cardamom pods and allspice berries. (I left in the black peppercorns, but you're welcome to remove those, too, if you're concerned about biting down on them.)

Transfer to a mini food-processor and puree, scraping down the sides and clearing the blade as needed to get a fairly smooth paste. Some of the spices and bits of ginger will still be visible, and that's fine.

Serve with Saint André cheese and, if you can find them, [Lesley Stowe's Raincoast Crisps](#).