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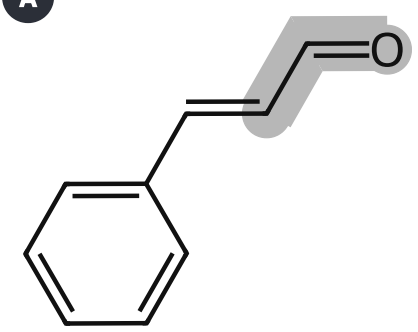
Aroma

Seven kitchen molecules you smell before you taste.

1 Heat and sting · 2 Aroma · 3 Taste and tricks

The grey glow marks the working part of each molecule.

A



C_9H_8O · 132.2 g/mol

দারুচিনি

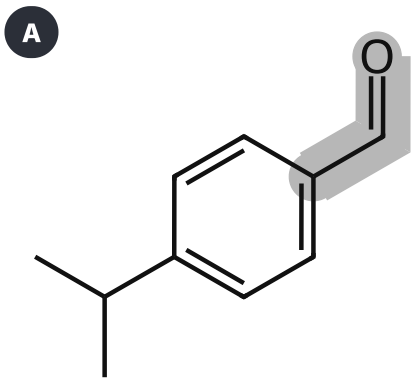
Cinnamon

Cinnamaldehyde

Group: aldehyde

The smell and taste of cinnamon. It is an aldehyde, the group at the end of a carbon chain.

A



$C_{10}H_{12}O$ · 148.2 g/mol

জিরা

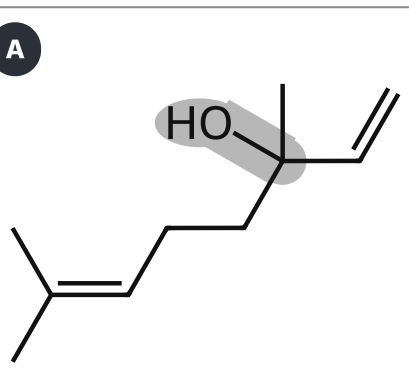
Cumin

Cuminaldehyde

Group: aldehyde

A main part of cumin's earthy smell. Another aldehyde.

A



$C_{10}H_{18}O$ · 154.3 g/mol

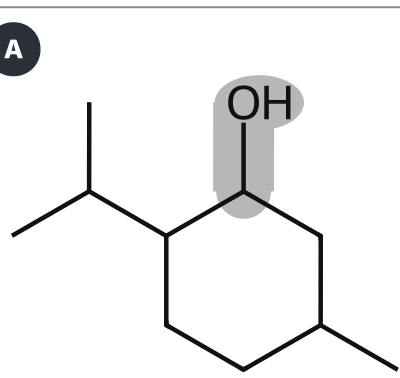
ধনিয়া

Coriander

Linalool · **Group: alcohol**

The light, flowery smell of coriander seed. The same molecule is found in lavender.

A



$C_{10}H_{20}O$ · 156.3 g/mol

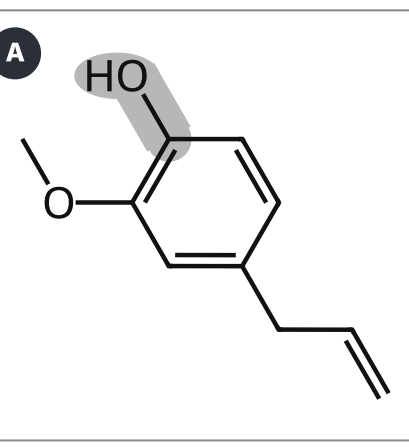
পুদিনা

Mint

Menthol · **Group: alcohol**

The cooling feel. It does not make you colder: it switches on a nerve that senses cold.

A



$C_{10}H_{12}O_2$ · 164.2 g/mol

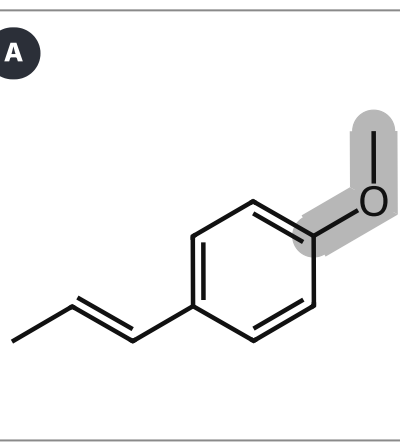
লবঙ্গ

Clove

Eugenol · **Group: phenol**

The warm, strong smell of clove. Clove oil has long been used on sore teeth.

A



$C_{10}H_{12}O$ · 148.2 g/mol

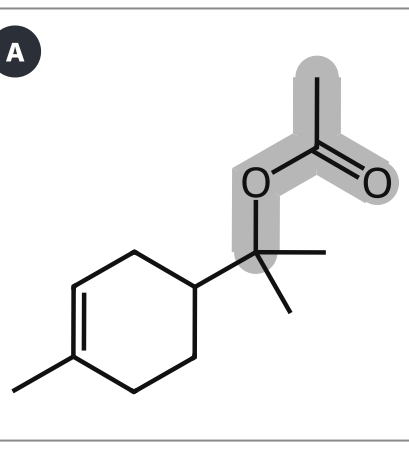
মৌরি

Fennel

Anethole · **Group: ether**

The sweet, liquorice-like flavour of fennel and aniseed.

A



$C_{12}H_{20}O_2$ · 196.3 g/mol

এলাচ

Cardamom

α-Terpinyl acetate

Group: ester

A main part of cardamom's sweet, flowery smell. It is an ester, and esters often smell fruity or floral.

GOOD TO KNOW

Why smells float

A smell is a molecule that evaporates easily and drifts into your nose. All seven molecules here weigh between 132 and 196 g/mol, small and light enough to float. Sugar, at 342, does not evaporate, which is why pure sugar has no smell.

TRY IT AT HOME

Two experiments for the kitchen table.

Whole or crushed

Smell a whole clove or cardamom pod, then crush it and smell again. Crushing breaks open tiny oil pockets, so more aroma molecules escape.

Warm it up

Smell a pinch of ground cinnamon. Hold it in your warm palm for a minute and smell again. Warmth helps more molecules evaporate, so the smell is stronger.

Ask an adult first. Never taste an experiment.

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