MEDIA RELEASE

TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
MARKET DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JANUARY 4, 2010

CONTACT: Linda Shelton, Marketing Specialist
615-837-5345
Linda.Shelton@TN.gov

SORGHUM SYRUP RUNS "RINGS" AROUND MOLASSES IN THESE CINNAMON TREATS

NASHVILLE, Tenn. - Sorghum cinnamon rings, the latest recipe featured on the Pick Tennessee Products Web site, offers a way to sneak a treat into the grateful hands of those who've sworn off sweets for the New Year.

How? Sorghum syrup is the primary product made when the extracted juice from the sorghum plant is boiled down. It retains all of its natural sugars-- plus many other nutrients including calcium, protein, fiber, iron, potassium, phosphorus and zinc. In short, sorghum is a valuable food, worthy of a spot on the "good" list of even the most health conscious eaters.

Before the invention of the daily vitamin, doctors even prescribed sorghum as a daily supplement for certain nutrients that were hard to come by in that time. Sorghum is now being "rediscovered" by today's nutrition conscious cooks—and anybody who appreciates really good food.

An important distinction: sorghum syrup and molasses are not the same thing. Molasses is just a by-product of the sugar-making process—that is, molasses is the brown dregs left over when turning sugar cane into the snowy granulated sugar found in stores. Molasses is also a blended product containing as much as 20 percent corn syrup. It has no nutritional value and has a very simple sweet taste. The flavor of sorghum, on the other hand, is complicated and brings a little flavor interest balance to a dessert along with all that nutrition.

Sorghum syrup was an important food source and the principle sweetener during North America's colonial times. In fact, the sorghum cooking pan traveled westward from the colonies with the settlers and remained America's primary sweetener right up to the beginning of the 20th century. In the South, where most sorghum is now grown, that appreciation and dependence on sorghum has continued, and Tennessee is still one of the nation's top two leading states in sorghum syrup production.

A natural sweetener, sorghum can be kept like honey. Although refrigeration does not hurt sorghum, it makes the consistency thicker and harder to spread. Storing at room

- MORE –

temperature will keep sorghum ready to use. Like honey, sorghum can crystallize, but putting it in a pan of warm water or putting it in the microwave for a few seconds will restore it to its previous form.

Though nutritious and natural, sorghum sadly cannot serve as a sugar substitute. It is still a sugar and will affect blood sugar readings.

The new sorghum cinnamon rings recipe comes from Tammy Algood, food expert and spokesperson for the statewide Pick Tennessee Products campaign. Pick Tennessee Products is part of the Tennessee Department of Agriculture Market Development Division, designed to help consumers identify and choose Tennessee farm products. Algood creates recipes featuring foods grown or processed in Tennessee.

For a listing of Tennessee sorghum producers, for more recipes featuring Tennessee sorghum and other farm direct products, visit www.picktnproducts.org.

###

Sorghum Cinnamon Rings Recipe

Yield: 4 dozen cookies
2 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 cup sugar, divided
1 cup unsalted butter, diced
1/4 cup sorghum syrup
2 tablespoons cold water
4 teaspoons ground cinnamon

In the bowl of an electric mixer, stir together the flour and 1/4 cup of the sugar. On medium speed, blend in the butter until the dough forms small pellets. Reduce mixer speed to low and stir in the sorghum and water, mixing only until the dough forms a ball. Divide the dough in half and flatten into disks. Wrap each disk tightly in plastic wrap and refrigerate 2 hours.

In a small bowl, combine the remaining sugar and cinnamon. Set aside.
On a lightly floured surface, roll half of the dough into a rectangle roughly 10 x 15-inches and 1/8-inch thick. Sprinkle the dough with half of the cinnamon sugar mixture. Starting with the smaller side, tightly roll the dough jellyroll style. Dampen the edge with water and seal. Repeat with the remaining dough. Wrap each roll in plastic and refrigerate 1 hour.

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees. Cut 1/4-inch slices from each roll and place on ungreased baking sheets 1-inch apart. Bake 16 to 17 minutes or until light brown. Immediately transfer to a wire rack to cool.

Note: Store in an airtight container.