

HERBS & SPICES

HERBS

This name generally refers to a group of aromatic plants grown specifically for use in cooking, though many are also attributed with medicinal properties. Along with spices, herbs have been used with food since time immemorial. Originally, one of their purposes was to disguise the flavor of perishable foods which were past their best, or even starting to rot. Today they are appreciated for the distinctive tastes they add to heighten or improve the flavor of meat, fish and vegetable dishes.

ANGELICA - A tall plant of the parsley family, it is chiefly cultivated on the continent, specially in France and was at one time very popular because of its pleasant musk like scent.



BASIL (Sweet Basil) - A herb with a distinctive, pungent taste and aromatic scent that is generally used with tomatoes and in Italian cooking. It is good in salads, with lamb, grilled meats and with green vegetables.

BAY (Sweet Bay, Sweet Laurel) - A herb with a strong, spicy flavor which can be used fresh or dried. It is one of the major ingredient for Bouquet Garni.



BOG MYRTLE (Sweet Gale) - Although not often used these days, this plant was once a popular herb. It grows in abundance on the northern moors of Britain. It's flavor is something like that of bay.

BOUQUET GARNI - A small bunch of herbs tied together and used to give flavor to stews, casseroles, soups and stocks. A simple bouquet garni consists of a sprig each of parsley, thyme, bay leaf, two cloves & a few peppercorns.



CAMOMILE (Chamomile) - There are many varieties of this daisy - like plant which grows wild over much of Europe and in America. It has aromatic scent and bitter flavor.

CELERY - A vegetable of carrot family widely grown in temperate regions. There are two main varieties of celery - the self blanching variety available from July to October, and the main-crop non-self blanching which is available from October through to the following year.



CATMINT (Catnip) - Best known as a garden loved by cats, this plant has strongly aromatic leaves that can be used as a herb, though it is less popular nowadays. Good for making herbal tea.

CELERIAC (Celery Root, Knob Celery) - Also sometimes known as turnip rooted celery, celeriac is a large knobbly swollen root with a pronounced celery flavor.



CHERVIL - This green leafy herb has a sweet, delicate flavor with a hint of aniseed. It looks a little like coriander. It grows mostly in France. It blends well with egg, cheese and chicken dishes.

CHIVE - This common herb is a member of the onion family and can be grown easily in most parts of the world. It produces purple flowers and has long, narrow tubular green stems which can be used raw to flavor salads and dressings and as a garnish.



CLARY- A herb from the same family as sage, and grown in southern Europe. It has tall pink, white and mauve flowering spikes with a bitter flavor.

COMFREY - A member of the borage family, comfrey is now one of the less common herbs. Its leaves and flowers can be used fresh in salads.



CORIANDER (Chinese Parsley, Cilantro) - A herb plant grow both for its leaves and seeds. Native to southern Europe, coriander is used in Chinese, Japanese, Indian, Middle Eastern and Mexican cooking. It have a mild sweet or orange flavor.

COSTMARY (Alecost) - Once used in beer making, it is now a rare herb that is mostly available in dry form.



CUBEB - A kind of pepper, native to Indonesia. They have a pungent spicy flavor like camphor and are used in eastern cookery and also in some medicines.

DILL - The feathery leaves of this European plant are used As a herb and dried seeds as spices. Good in salads, garnish, egg but classically with Salmon.



EPAZOTE (Mexican Tea, Wormseed) - A strong flavored herb that grows in America and some parts of Europe. It is most used in Mexican cooking but can also be used for making tea.

FENNEL - There are two types of fennel plant, both of which are common in Mediterranean countries. The feathery leaves of one type are used as a herb, while the bulbous root of the other type is eaten as a vegetable.



- a) Herb or Sweet Fennel has a slightly aniseed flavor. It is a classical flavoring for fish.
- b) Florence Fennel or Fennel Root, is a white bulbous vegetable topped with green feathery leaves.



FINES HERBES - A classical French herb mixture, traditionally consisting of finely chopped fresh chives, chervil, parsley and tarragon.

GARLIC - Although often used like a herb or spice, garlic in fact belongs to a group of plants known as alliums. Also included in this group are onions, chives and leeks. It has been mentioned in medical and herbal literature for well over 700 years as a vital food, if taken regularly and in small doses, to improve and maintain good general health. It is also recognized as an aid to digestion.



LEEK - A vegetable belonging to the same family as onion and garlic. Its flavor is mild but distinctive. The lower part of the stem is earthed up so that it remains white.

LEMON BALM (Balm) - This herb is a member of the mint family with green, heart shaped leaves. It has a lemony scent and taste and is good with fish, poultry and ham dishes. Also good for herbal tea.





LOVAGE - A herb with sharp peppery flavor. Good in salads and in cold roast beef. It is also used to make a alcoholic cordial.

MARJORAM - This small leaved herb has a spicy, slightly bitter, nutmeg like flavor and can be used to replace basil if not available. There are Many varieties but the most common being the savory pot and the sweet Marjoram. Wild marjoram is also known as oregano. Good in stuffing, roasts, soups, pizza toppings etc.



MELLIOT (Sweet Clove) - A rare & delicate herb plant that is a member of the clove family. Good in stuffings & to flavor home made wine. The most common variety of melliot has yellow flowers, a blue flowering variety that originated in Turkey is an essential ingredient of an unusal Swiss Green cheese called Sapsago or Schabzeiger.

MYRTLE - Although not much used in cooking, it is a very fragrant herb that goes particularly well with lamb.



OREGANO (Wild Marjoram) - This herb is a member of marjoram family and can be used instead of marjoram, though it is much more aromatic and strongly flavored. Good in meat, sausages, soups and pizzas.

PARSLEY - A mild, pleasantly flavored herb with flat or curly leaves which make an attractive garnish sprinkled on food. Most of the flavor of parsley is in the stalks which are used as a classic ingredient in bouquet garni and fines herbes.



PENNYROYAL - A small creeping plant related to the mint family. It is strongly scented and for many centuries was used to repel insects. It is popularly known as pudding grass as it is a traditional flavoring in black pudding.

PURSLANE (Pigweed, Portulaca) - An unusual annual herb grown and used as a salad leaf or for cooking as a vegetable.



ROSEMARY - A strong, pungent herbs with spikey leaves. The flavor of rosemary overpowers other herbs. Good in meat, fish, poultry and some sweet dishes.

RUE - A hardy evergreen shrub with blue grey foliage and a pungent aromatic smell. It has long been cultivated for its medicinal and culinary properties.



SAGE - A large leaved herb with a strong, slightly bitter taste. Good in stuffings, casseroles, salads, meat dishes (specially pork), egg and cheese dishes.

SAVORY - A herb which comes in summer and winter varieties and is best when fresh. It has peppery flavor which has a particular affinity with beans.



SWEET CICELY - An aromatic herb with a sweet flavor resembling aniseed. It can be used as salad dressings.

SWEET WODRUFF - A white flowering woodland herb that grows wild over much of Europe. It is not usually used for cooking but is an essential flavoring in the young German wine served on 1st May and known as Maibowle.



TARRAGON - A herb with a distinctive, unusual flavor. There are two main species, the French variety being better than the Russian. It is also used to flavor vinegar, in marinades, with fish and chicken.

THYME - This small leaved herb comes in many varieties, of which garden and lemon are the most common. It has a strong aromatic flavor and is a constituent of bouquet garni.



VERBENA (Lemon Verbena) - A herb with a faint lemon flavor, which used for making a herbal tea.

YARROW - This is a common perennial herb which grows in parts of Europe. It has furrowed downy stems and clusters of small white flowers. The plants healing properties were known to the ancient Greek who named Yarrow Archillea after the Greek hero Achilles.



YERBAMATE - A South American shrub, the leaves of which are dried and used to make a drink called Paraguay tea.

SPICES

The dried parts of aromatic plants that are used for flavoring sweet and savory dishes. Spices may be derived from the fruit, bark, seed, root or flower bud of various plants. Most come from hot countries. Once rare and expensive commodities spices are some of the most useful ingredients available to every cook.



AJOWAN - A spice seed that is closely related to caraway and looks similar to celery seeds. It has a strong thyme like flavor and is often used in Indian recipes.

ANISE PEPPER (Chinese Pepper, Szechuan Pepper) - A hot aromatic spice made from the dried red berries of a Chinese tree. It is one of the ingredients for five spice powder.



ASAFOETIDA - A spice derived from the resin of a plant native to Afghanistan and Iran. It can be bought in solid form. It has a rather strong unpleasant smell and the flavor is pungent, a little like spicy garlic.

CARDAMOM - A member of the ginger family. It is sold both whole, either green or black or ground. Black cardamom pods are larger than green. Cardamom has a strong, bitter-sweet, slightly lemony flavor and should be used sparingly. It is widely used in Indian, Eastern and Continental European cooking.



CASSIA - The inner bark of a type of cinnamon tree grown in the East particularly in China. Cassia resembles cinnamon in flavor, color and aroma, but is coarser and less expensive.

CAYENNE (Cayenne Pepper) - The spice comes from the red pepper family and is prepared from the smallest, hottest chillies.





CELERY SEEDS - These spice seeds do not come from the same variety of celery as the one used in salads, though they have a strong taste that resembles the vegetables.

CHILLY PEPPER - The small but powerful peppers are from a plant that is a member of the capsicum family, as are sweet peppers. The largest varieties come from the West Indies and Mexico. Mexican chillies are also known as Jalapeno. The fresh chilly pepper most familiar here are imported from Africa.



CHILLY POWDER - It is pure ground chilly peppers and a very hot spice indeed. It can be used extremely sparingly in Mexican dishes and in Indian cooking.

CINNAMON - This is a popular spice with a sweet, pungent flavor. It is in fact, the inner bark of a small evergreen tree which is grown mostly in Sri-Lanka.



CLOVE - When whole this spice resembles small nails, and it gets it's name from the Latin word for nails, CLAVUS. It is in fact the tiny flower bud of a large evergreen tree that grows best in tropical region i.e. Island of Zanzibar and in the Spice Island of South East Asia. It contain a powerful oil with antiseptic and anaesthetic quality which can be used to relieve toothache.

CUMIN - The seed of a plant related to parsley that are used as a spice. Mostly cultivated in Mediterranean countries and India. It has got three varieties - black, white and brown.



FENUGREEK - The fenugreek plant originated in the Middle East and grows throughout the Mediterranean area. It belongs to the pea family.

FIVE SPICE POWDER - A mixture of ground spices used as a flavoring in authentic Chinese cooking. It consist of star anise, anise pepper, fennel, cloves and cinnamon or cassia.



GALANGAL (Laos, Leuqkauas) - There are two varieties of this spice plant, lesser and greater galangal. Both of them are related to ginger. Flavor of the rhizome is also similar to galangal.

GARAM MASALA - A mixture of ground spices used in Indian cooking. The ingredients of a garam masala vary according to the dish in which it is to be used. An all purpose version can be made by black cardamom, green cardamom, black peppercorns and cumin.



GINGER - A plant is native to South East Asia but is now grown in warm climates all over the world. The plant is grown for its root like underground stem which has a hot, sweetish taste and is sold in various forms.

GOTA - A brightly colored mixture of spices served in India at the end of meal as an aid to digestion.



HARISSA - A hot mixture of chilly and other spices that is used in Middle Eastern cooking. It can be bought in powder and paste form and may contain up to 20 spices. It is often served in North African dishes.

MACE - The outer covering (Aril) of the nutmeg which is bright red when harvested and dries to a deep orange. It is native to South East Asia.



MANGO POWDER (Aamchur) - Made from dried raw, green mangoes, this sour testing powder is much used in Indian cooking to give a piquant flavor to many dishes.

MIXED SPICE - A mixture of sweet flavored ground spices, usually consisting of cloves, all spice, cinnamon, nutmeg and ginger.



MUSTARD - Classified as a spice, the seeds of the mustard plant are usually ground and used to make a condiment or flavoring. There are three types of mustard seeds - Black, Brown and White. There are many different types of mustard now available with many varying textures and flavors -

1. English Mustard which is made from ground husked brown and white mustard seeds combined with wheat flour and colored with turmeric.
2. French Mustard is milder than English and is pale in color.
3. German Mustard is made for accompany sausage popular in Germany.
4. American Mustard is sweeter and milder and it contains turmeric.
5. Cremona Mustard (Mostarda Di Cremona) is more like a chutney than a mustard.

NIGELLA - Small, hard, triangular black seeds. They are used as a spice in India, Egypt and Middle East and have a peppery flavor.



NUTMEG - The seed of the nutmeg fruit which grows on a tree cultivated in South East Asia. It is hard, brown and nut like in appearance and grows in the center of the large round fruit.

PAPRIKA - Derived from a variety of sweet red pepper, paprika is mild spice which is always sold ground to a red powder. Hungarian variety suppose to be the best and it is a classic ingredient for Goulash.



PEPPER - The spice is the berry of tropical vine which produces hanging strings of berries. There are several varieties, green, black, white, pink etc.

PICCALILLI - A bright yellow English Mustard pickle of Anglo-Indian origin. It is usually served with cold meats.



PICKLING SPICE - A pungent mixture of varying spices added to the vinegar when making pickles.

POPPY SEEDS - Classified as a spice seeds, these are the small blue-black seeds of the opium poppy, which have no narcotic effect but are nutty flavored, very hard and usually sold whole. Poppy seeds are widely used in Jewish and Central European cookery.



SASSAFRAS - The distinctive lauraceous tree originates in the United States. It is mostly used in soft drinks, confectionery and ice-cream.

SESAME SEEDS - These small spices have a rich, sweet, slightly burnt flavor which is enhanced by toasting or frying in butter. They come from a plant that originated in Africa.





TAMARIND (Indian Date) - A spice derived from the large pod of the Indian tamarind tree. It is seeded, peeled and processed into a dark brown pulp which is sold dried.

TURMERIC - A spice derived from the dried root of a plant of the ginger family. It has an aromatic slightly bitter and should be used sparingly in curry powder, pickles and relishes.



ZEDOARY (Kentjoer) - A spice derived from the dried rhizome of a South East Asian plant related to the ginger and turmeric. It is used in Malayasian and Indonesian cooking.