



INDIAN CULTURE

Discover, Learn, Immerse, Connect

Herbs & Spices

Unlock the secrets of nature's
finest treasures!



This Book is dedicated to all
Culinary Enthusiasts.

Designed & Developed by Indian Culture Portal.

The background of the page is a photograph of several white ceramic bowls filled with different types of ground spices. Metal scoops with long handles are placed in the bowls. The spices vary in color, including shades of brown, orange, and red. The image is slightly blurred, giving it a soft, artistic feel.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Since ancient times, India has been celebrated as the land of herbs and spices and has been associated with their cultivation and trade with foreign lands. Both herbs and spices have played an important role in the everyday lives of people across the world. Indian cuisine, shaped over centuries by a blend of domestic and foreign influences, owes its rich flavours and enticing aromas to these treasured spices. These ingredients are not only used to enhance the aroma and flavour of food but are also valued for their preservative and medicinal qualities.

Let us explore some of the interesting facts about these herbs and spices.



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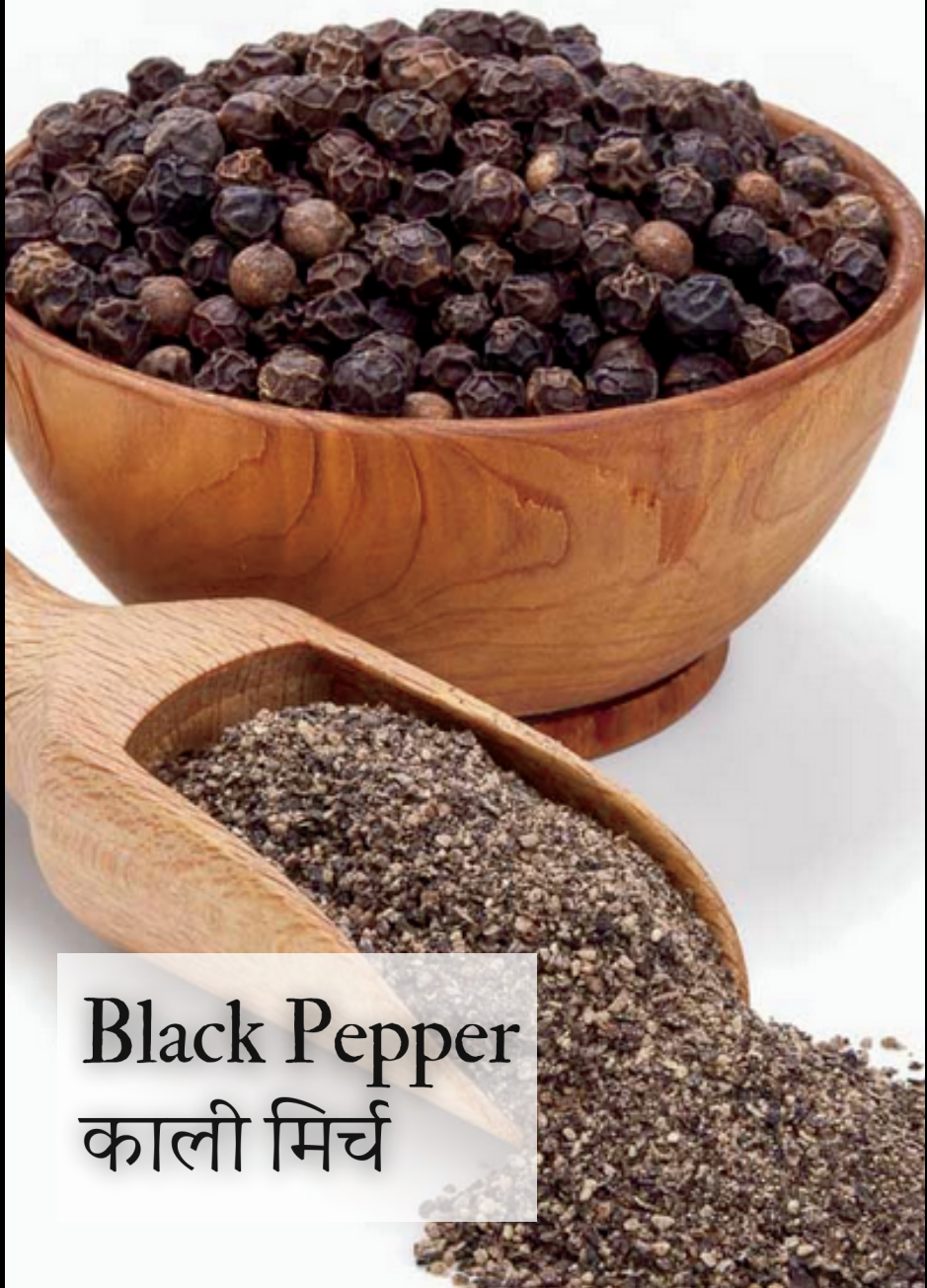
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Black Pepper
काली मिर्च

BLACK PEPPER - काली मिर्च

DID YOU KNOW?

- While salt is found everywhere, black pepper originated in Kerala, a state in South India!
- The word 'pepper' comes from the Sanskrit word *pippali*, which evolved into *piper* in Latin and *pipor* in Old English. Black pepper was first cultivated in the Malabar region of India, which still produces the finest pepper today!
- The presence of peppercorns in the mummy of Egyptian Pharaoh Ramses the Great suggests trade relations between Egypt and India even in ancient times!



Cardamom इलाईची



CARDAMOM - इलाईची

DID YOU KNOW?

- Cardamom grew wild along the Western Ghats in South India, giving a part of the region the name, Cardamom Hills.
- Cardamom is ranked as the third most expensive spice in the world after Vanilla and Saffron!
- Cardamom was a luxury item in the Roman Empire, sought after by the wealthy. Greek physician Dioscorides praised its medicinal value, especially for digestion. The first-century Roman cookbook of Apicius features cardamom alongside ginger and pepper in its recipes.
- The variant of cardamom grown in Guatemala, introduced there by the German Coffee planter Oscar Majus Kloeffer before World War I, was taken from the Malabar Coast.





Carom Seeds अजवाइन

CAROM SEEDS - अजवाइन

DID YOU KNOW?

- *Ajwain* also known as Carom seeds is grown across the Indian Subcontinent and the Middle East.
- Known as *Tamini* in Sanskrit and *Zenyan* or *Nankhab* in Persian, this herb has been a cornerstone of Ayurveda and Persian medicine, earning the title of an 'in-house doctor' for its versatile therapeutic uses!
- While *Ajwain* leaves aid digestion, the seeds, with their antispasmodic and tonic properties, are said to treat stomach disorders and regulate acidity.
- *Ajwain* also helps treat kidney stones, asthma, bronchial issues, acne, muscle spasms, and toothaches, making it a versatile and valuable natural remedy for overall health.





Dry Mango
Powder
अमचूर

DRY MANGO POWDER - अमचूर

DID YOU KNOW?

- Mango, known as the "king of fruits" in India is enjoyed in various forms, one of which is *amchur*—sun-dried mango powder made from unripe mangoes.
- In Ayurveda, *amchur* is recommended for use to aid digestion and support heart health.
- *Amchur* is also a key ingredient in popular Indian snacks like *samosas* and *kachoris* and is also mixed with other spices to make *chaat masala*.



Asafoetida हींग



ASAFOETIDA - हींग

DID YOU KNOW?

- Asafoetida, known as *Hing* in Hindi, is a vital ingredient in Indian cuisine, which adds flavour to dishes ranging from the rich *rogan josh* of Kashmir to the tangy *sambhar* of Southern India.
- Surprisingly, asafoetida, a staple in Indian cuisine, is not native to India. It originated in Iran, where it was once revered as the "food of the gods", as per ancient Zoroastrian texts.
- *Hing* is also valued for its medicinal properties. It aids the process of digestion, combats flatulence, and, due to its anti-inflammatory effects, helps treat ailments such as bronchitis.
- India has recently begun cultivating asafoetida. In October 2020, the CSIR-Institute of Himalayan Bioresource Technology initiated its cultivation in Lahaul Valley, Himachal Pradesh.



Indian Bay Leaf
तेजपत्ता

INDIAN BAY LEAF - तेजपत्ता

DID YOU KNOW?

- The Indian Bay Leaf also known as *Tej patta* or *tejpat* is an indispensable staple in the Indian culinary tradition.
- Dried bay leaves have a stronger aroma than fresh ones and most Indian cuisines use dried bay leaves to increase their aroma and flavour.
- *Tej patta* helps reduce bad cholesterol and regulates blood pressure by flushing out excess sodium through its diuretic properties, making it beneficial for heart health.



A close-up photograph of cinnamon sticks and ground cinnamon powder. The sticks are long, thin, and have a warm, reddish-brown hue. The powder is a fine, light brown color, piled up in the foreground. The background is a solid, bright orange color.

Cinnamon
दालचीनी

CINNAMON - दालचीनी

DID YOU KNOW?

- Cinnamon, known as *Dalchini* in Hindi, has been a highly coveted spice across the world since ancient times.
- In the 18th century, the British East India Company established the Anjarakkandy Cinnamon Estate in Kannur, Kerala, which went on to become the largest cinnamon estate in Asia.
- Cinnamon has a sweet and warm flavour, which is used in baking and cooking other culinary preparations.
- The Roman emperor Nero was so devastated after the death of his wife, Poppaea Sabina that he burned a year's supply of this exotic and expensive spice.



Chilli मिर्च



CHILI - मिर्च

DID YOU KNOW?

- Though we commonly associate the word Chilli with the colours green and red, they also come in shades of purple, yellow and orange. The chilli has 200 varieties.
- Chillies, native to the Americas, were brought to India by Portuguese traders in the late 15th century. Before this, black pepper was the go-to spice to add heat to Indian cuisine. The arrival of chillies transformed Indian cooking, giving birth to the spicy flavours we love today!
- A key ingredient in Asian cuisine is ground chilli powder, obtained from dried red chillies, which adds heat and colour to a variety of dishes.
- The *Bhut Jolokia* found all over Northeast India especially Assam, was recognized by the Guinness World Records in 2007 as the world's hottest chilli pepper.





Clove
लौंग

CLOVE - लौंग

DID YOU KNOW?

- Cloves, known as *Larwang* in India, were valued for their medicinal properties and as a natural mouth freshener, as mentioned in the ancient text of *Charaka Samhita*.
- Cloves were a key export for Indian traders, highly prized as both a luxury and medicinal item in the Byzantine Empire.
- Clove, with its anti-inflammatory and therapeutic properties, is used for treating digestive issues and as an essential oil for soothing toothache.



Cumin जीरा



CUMIN - जीरा

DID YOU KNOW?

- Cumin, known as *Jeera* in Hindi, is believed to be native to the Central Asian region.
- Cumin is so beloved in Indian households that India produces 70% of the world's cumin and consumes 90% of it!
- In India, cumin is primarily cultivated in the regions of Gujarat and Rajasthan.
- *Jal Jeera*, a drink made from ground cumin is a popular refreshing drink consumed by people across India.
- The oil extracted from cumin helps moderate blood sugar levels. Cumin seeds also have anti-bacterial, anti-tumour and immunogenic properties.



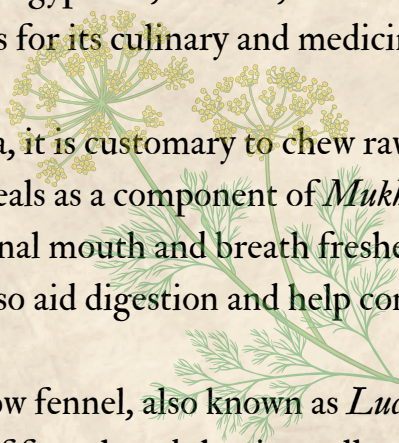
Fennel सौंफ



FENNEL - सौंफ

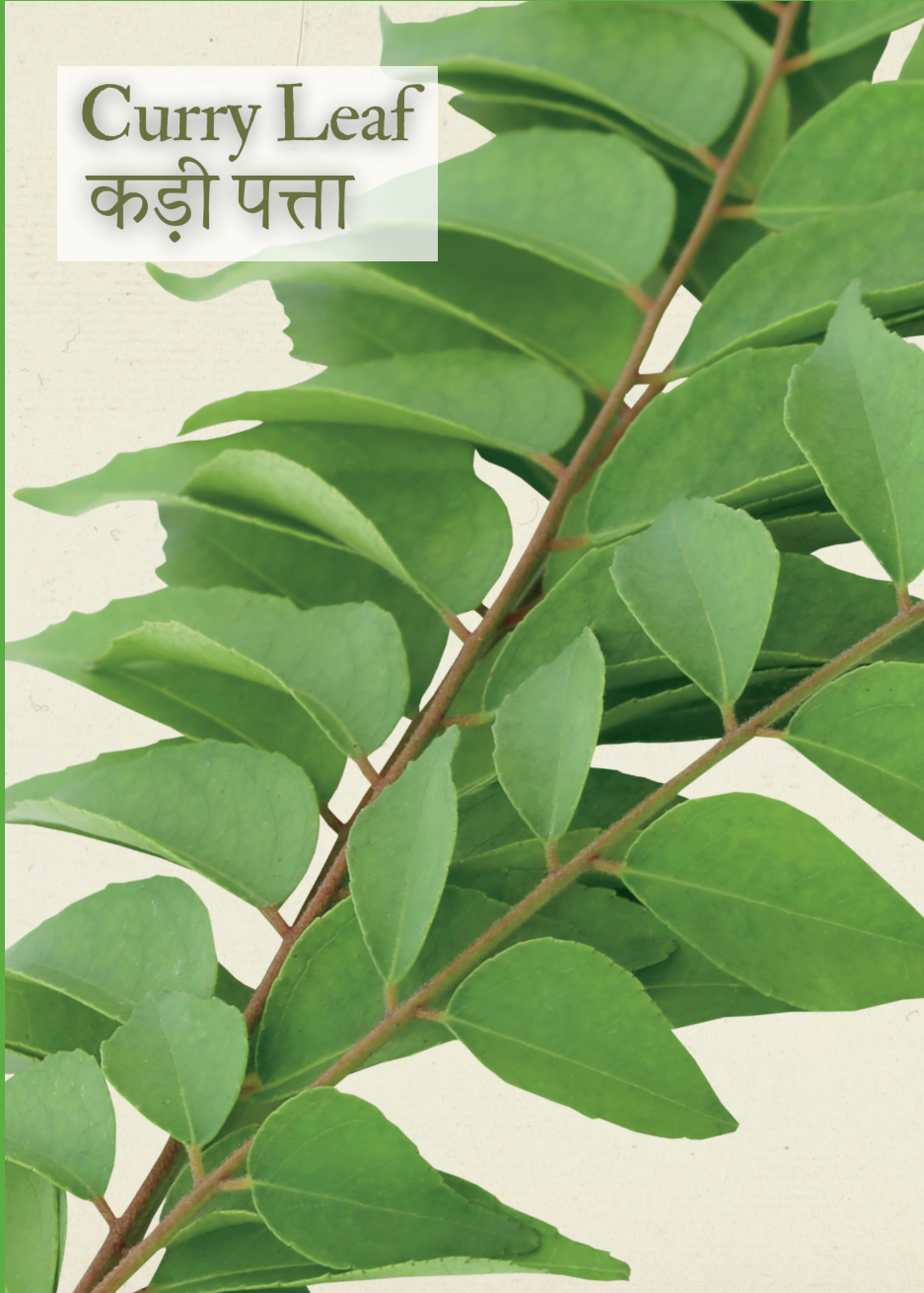
DID YOU KNOW?

- Fennel was a widely used kitchen herb, known to ancient Egyptians, Indians, Greeks, Chinese, and Romans for its culinary and medicinal benefits.
- In India, it is customary to chew raw fennel seeds after meals as a component of *Mukhwas*, a traditional mouth and breath freshener. Fennel seeds also aid digestion and help control obesity.
- Lucknow fennel, also known as *Lucknowi saunf*, is a type of fennel seed that is smaller, sweeter, and more aromatic than regular fennel seeds.



Curry Leaf

कड़ी पत्ता



CURRY LEAF - कड़ी पत्ता

DID YOU KNOW?

- Curry leaf is an integral part of Indian culinary traditions, especially in South India. Evidence of its use can be found in Tamil literature between the 1st and 4th century CE.
- Beyond its culinary significance, curry leaves have long been recognized for their impressive medicinal properties. The leaves are believed to possess anti-inflammatory, anti-diabetic, and anti-cancer properties, making them a staple in traditional Indian medicine.
- Curry leaves have also found use in various industries, including cosmetics and personal care. The leaves are used in the production of essential oils, soaps, and hair care products, highlighting their versatile benefits beyond the kitchen.



Garlic

लहसुन



GARLIC - लहसुन

DID YOU KNOW?

- Evidence of Garlic being cultivated comes from Ancient Sumeria (in present-day Iraq) almost 4500 years ago!
- The ayurvedic text *Charaka Samhita* written about 2000 years ago, recommends garlic for the treatment of heart disease and arthritis.
- Garlic is a powerhouse of medicinal properties-it's not just an antioxidant but also boasts antiviral and antimicrobial abilities. It also plays a key role in reducing blood clotting, making it a natural health booster!



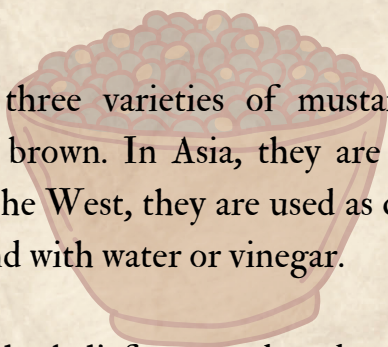


Mustard
सरसों

MUSTARD - सरसों

DID YOU KNOW?

- Mustard, scientifically named *Brassica nigra*, is one of the oldest and most widely used spices in the world. It has been cultivated in India since the pre-historic period.
- There are three varieties of mustard seeds: black, yellow, and brown. In Asia, they are used as a spice, whereas in the West, they are used as condiments after being ground with water or vinegar.
- As per popular belief, mustard seeds are sprinkled over courtyards to ward off the evil eye.
- While Ayurveda prescribed the use of brown mustard seeds for alleviating digestive issues, Greek physicians recommended the use of mustard seeds to cure ailments like scorpion stings and toothaches.



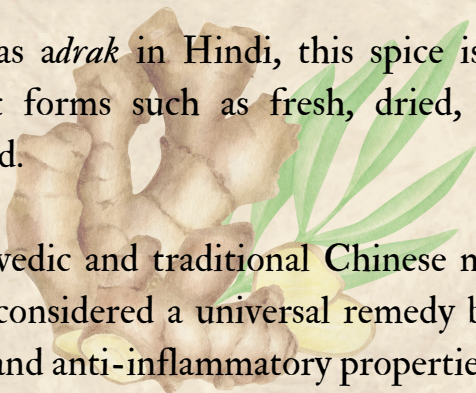


Ginger
अदरक

GINGER - अदरक

DID YOU KNOW?

- Ginger, a plant with an irregular, finger-like shape, originated in Asia.
- Known as *adrak* in Hindi, this spice is available in different forms such as fresh, dried, pickled, and powdered.
- In Ayurvedic and traditional Chinese medicine, this spice is considered a universal remedy because of its healing and anti-inflammatory properties.





Mint
पुदीना

MINT - पुदीना

DID YOU KNOW?

- Mint, or *pudina*, has been valued since ancient times for its cooling properties. It aids digestion, alleviates colic pain, and promotes food assimilation.
- Its refreshing aroma is also used in balms and oils to relieve headaches, nausea, and other discomforts.
- Due to its aromatic quality ancient Greeks and Romans used to get their tables rubbed with mint before their guests arrived. It was considered a symbol of hospitality and wisdom.
- The herb is use to prepare *chutney*, which accompanies Indian snacks.





Nutmeg & Mace जायफल एवं जावित्री

NUTMEG & MACE - जायफल एवं जावित्री

DID YOU KNOW?

- Nutmeg & Mace come from the tree *Myristica fragans*. This tree traces its origin to the Banda region in Indonesia.
- In Sanskrit, nutmeg is also known as *Jaiphal*, while mace is called *Javitri*. Both are used to prepare sweet and savoury Indian dishes like *Kheer* and *biryani*, among others.
- In Ayurveda, nutmeg and mace are recommended for medicinal purposes to alleviate pain due to their anti-inflammatory properties.
- The essential oil extracted from nutmeg by steam distillation is utilised in the pharmaceuticals and perfume industry.



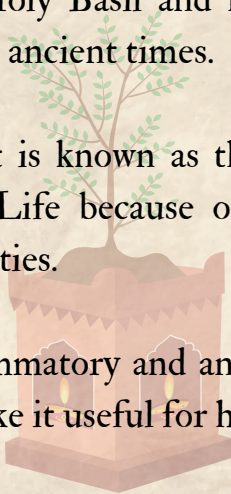
Holy Basil तुलसी



HOLY BASIL - तुलसी

DID YOU KNOW?

- *Tulsi*, native to Asia, belongs to the Basil family. It is also called Holy Basil and has been revered in Hinduism since ancient times.
- In Ayurveda, it is known as the Queen of Herbs and Elixir of Life because of its medicinal and spiritual properties.
- The anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties of this herb make it useful for healing wounds.
- Traditional Indian recipes often include blending basil leaves or using its powder when preparing herbal teas, such as *kadha*, which help relieve cold and cough.





Turmeric
हल्दी

HOLY BASIL - तुलसी

DID YOU KNOW?

- Turmeric, commonly known as *Haldi* in Hindi, belongs to the ginger family. It is also referred to as “Indian saffron” due to its distinct yellow colour.
- The use of turmeric can be traced back to the Vedic Age where it was used not only as a spice but also as an important element in rituals.
- *Susbruta Samhita*, an ancient Ayurvedic surgical treatise, recommends using *haridra* (turmeric) to alleviate pain caused by poisonous food and to boost overall immunity.
- In Indian cooking, people use turmeric powder to prepare and flavour various curries and dishes. Dry turmeric, on the other hand, is used to make pickles.
- In Western medicine, researchers are actively studying turmeric's health benefits, particularly its anti-inflammatory and anti-oxidant properties.





Coriander
धनिया

CORIANDER- धनिया

DID YOU KNOW?

- Coriander is one of the oldest herbs used in cuisine, with coriander seeds being discovered in 8,000-year-old caves in Israel!
- Coriander is mentioned in both Ayurvedic and Biblical texts, highlighting its long history as an essential herb in ancient cultures.
- Coriander seeds, along with the powder made from them, are widely used in culinary practices to infuse dishes with a warm, citrusy flavour.
- Today, India is one of the biggest producers of coriander which forms an integral part of Indian cuisine.



Nigella Seeds कलौंजी



NIGELLA SEEDS - कलौंजी

DID YOU KNOW?

- *Nigella sativa*, also known as black cumin or *kalonji*, boasts a remarkable medicinal legacy spanning over 2,500 years.
- In India, *kalonji* has been a cornerstone of traditional medicine systems such as Unani, Tibba, Ayurveda, and Siddha for centuries.
- *Kalonji* is an essential ingredient in the traditional five-spice mix called *panch phoran*, which is used to temper *dal* (lentils), vegetables and other dishes.
- Ibn Sina (Avicenna), in his renowned work *The Canon of Medicine* (980-1037 CE), praised *Nigella sativa* for its ability to cure phlegm, boost energy, and aid recovery from fatigue and lethargy.



Saffron केसर

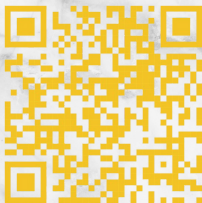
SAFFRON - केसर

DID YOU KNOW?

- The word Saffron, also known as *kesar* in Hindi, originates from the Arabic word *zafaran*, which means yellow. Due to its labour-intensive harvesting process, saffron is one of the most expensive spices in the world.
- One of the earliest textual references to saffron can be traced to the Mesopotamian work, *The Legend of Sargon of Akkad* (2300 BCE).
- India is home to one of the finest varieties of saffron, which is cultivated in Kashmir. This spice is a key ingredient in the traditional drink called *Kahwa*. In 2020, the saffron from the valley was awarded a Geographical Indication (GI) Tag.
- This exotic spice, known for its rich texture and aromatic flavour, is used in the preparation of many Asian and Mediterranean dishes.



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