

## THE IMPORTANCE OF SPICES IN OUR LIFE

*Ilana TENDLER*

*Technical University of Moldova*

**Summary:** *Spicy food is enjoyed all over the world because spices add an incredible amount of flavor to what you eat. Different cultures all over the world have dishes that excite and stimulate your palate with spices and add heat and taste to their everyday ingredients. Recent research shows that adding some spices to your meal can provide more health benefits than it was previously thought. I chose this topic because I believe that the topic of spices often remains in the background in food industry, although it is no less important. In this research, I tried to uncover the importance of spices in our life.*

**Key words:** *Spices, herbs, leaves, roots, bark, seeds, nutritional value.*

In the culinary arts, the word spice refers to any dried part of a plant, other than the leaves, used for seasoning a recipe, but not used as the main ingredient. Why not the leaves? Because the green leafy parts of plants are considered herbs.

Every other part of the plant, including dried bark, roots, berries, seeds, twigs, or anything else that isn't the green leafy part, is considered a spice. Today, India produces about 75% of the world's spices. They even created the Indian Institute of Spices Research devoted to the study of spices.

Spices are very important as food and as medicine. They bring out the unique natural taste and they can change the look of the food to make it more attractive in color. Some of them grow in the wild and are a very good source of food preservative especially for industrially processed foods. As medicine or food, the importance of spices cannot be overemphasized. Spices bring out the natural taste of the dishes. They were very important in ancient times and today we cannot cook without them. They come in different flavors and aroma. They are simply food enhancers used to give our dishes a strong taste and smell. Some spices are boiled in water to make tea.

Curry is the most popular product made from a combination of several spices. Curry is used to season the dairy and poultry products. The main ingredients of curry include ginger, turmeric, fennel, cumin, fenugreek, coriander and nutmeg. It provides some flavour for meat, fish, vegetables and soups. Spices are also used as natural food preservatives. Cinnamon can easily replace the industrial preservatives, which are dangerous to the human health. Pharmaceutically, they are used to flavor the medicines. Clove is processed to produce Clove oil, which is very useful for medicine. The world's most adored spice, saffron, goes to strengthen the point that spices were as important to the ancient times as Crude oil is in our present day.

One thing to keep in mind when cooking dishes with spices is that spices start to lose their flavor when they are ground. Therefore, whenever possible, it is best to grind your own spices immediately before using them, rather than using spices that are already grounded. You can use a coffee grinder or mortar and pestle for this purpose. If you do decide to use a coffee grinder you might want to use one only for spices and one for coffee beans so as not to accidentally flavor your morning brew!

While spices do not actually spoil or rot, they will lose their flavor over the time. As spices are generally added precisely to add flavor, it is best to use them in a certain amount of time. If grinding your own spices is not possible, try to use the freshest spices you possibly can. As a rule, ground spices that are older than six months should be replaced. The completely dry spices can last for up to two years if stored properly.

Spices last longer when stored in a cool, dry location. So keeping jars of spices right next to your stove will significantly reduce their shelf life. An enclosed spice rack or storing them in an opaque container will help your spices keep their flavor longer. Spices are used in small quantities to flavor dishes, which means they add few calories to meals. This does not mean that the spices do not cause a large impact on your diet; they can be a great way to add necessary vitamins and minerals.

In conclusion, I want to mention that spices are a very versatile plant product that can be used in a variety of ways. Start with spices that make you feel comfortable, eventually add more to make your dishes more interesting and complex. Cooking simple is one thing, but adding the value of antioxidant and anti-inflammatory and immune support by cooking with seasonings will add an extra step for health! Be creative and have fun in the kitchen!

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