

ALLSPICE

Allspice is the dried, unripe berry of *Pimenta dioica*, an evergreen tree in the myrtle family. After drying, the berries are small, dark brown balls just a little larger than peppercorns. Allspice is pungent and fragrant. It is not a blend of "all spices," but its taste and aroma remind many people of a mix of cloves, cinnamon, and nutmeg.

Geographical Sources

Allspice comes from Jamaica, Mexico, and Honduras.

Traditional Ethnic Uses

Allspice is used in Jamaican jerk seasoning and in Jamaican soups, stews, and curries. It also is used in pickling spice, spiced tea mixes, cakes, cookies, and pies. Food producers use it in ketchup, pickles, and sausages.

ANISE

Anise Seed is a gray brown oval seed from *Pimpinella anisum*, a plant in the parsley family. It is related to caraway, dill, cumin, and fennel.

Geographical Sources

Spain and Mexico.

Traditional Ethnic

Uses Europeans use Anise in cakes, cookies, and sweet breads. In the Middle East and India, it is used in soups and stews. Its licoricelike flavor is popular in candies and Anise oil is used in liqueurs.

Taste and Aroma

Anise Seeds smell and taste like licorice.

BASIL

Basil is a bright green, leafy plant, *Ocimum basilicum*, which is in the mint family.

Geographical Sources

Basil is grown primarily in the United States, France, and the Mediterranean region.

Traditional Ethnic Uses

Basil is widely used in Italian cuisine and is often paired with tomatoes. It is also used in Thai cooking. The herb complements meat, vegetables, cheese, and egg dishes.

Taste and Aroma

Basil has a sweet, herbal bouquet.

BAY LEAVES

General Description

Bay Leaves come from the sweet bay or laurel tree, known botanically as *Laurus nobilis*. The elliptical leaves of both trees are green, glossy, and grow up to 3 inches long.

Geographical Sources

Bay Leaves are grown in the Mediterranean region.

Traditional Ethnic Uses

Bay Leaves, a staple in American kitchens, are used in soups, stews, meat and vegetable dishes. The leaves also flavor classic French dishes such as bouillabaise and bouillon.

Taste and Aroma

Bay Leaves are pungent and have a sharp, bitter taste.

CARAWAY SEEDS**General Description**

Caraway Seed is actually the fruit of a biennial herb in the parsley family, known as *Carum carvi*. The seed is about 1/5 inch long and tapered at the ends. The hard seed shells have five pale ridges.

Geographical Sources

Holland is the world's largest Caraway producer. It is also grown in Germany, Russia, Morocco, parts of Scandinavia, Canada, and the United States.

Traditional Ethnic Uses

Caraway Seed is a common flavoring for many kinds of rye bread. It is also used to flavor sauerkraut, sausage, cheese, cabbage, and soups.

Taste and Aroma

Caraway Seed has a pungent aroma and a distinctly sweet but tangy flavor.

CARDOMOM**General Description**

Cardamom is the ground seed of a tropical fruit in the ginger family known as *Elettaria cardamomum*. The seeds are found in oval shaped fruit pods that are between 1/4 and 1 inch long.

Geographical Sources

Cardamom comes from India, Guatemala, and Ceylon.

Traditional Ethnic Uses

In India Cardamom is traditionally used in curry blends, and in Scandinavian countries it is commonly added to breads; however, most of the world's Cardamom crop is used in Arabic countries as a flavoring for coffee.

Taste and Aroma

Cardamom has an intense, pungent, sweet flavor.

CAYENNE PEPPER**General Description**

Cayenne Pepper is made from the dried pods of pungent chili peppers. This fiery spice adds flair to dishes from Asia, the Americas, and the Middle East.

Geographical Sources

Cayenne Pepper comes from Central and South America and the West Indies.

Traditional Ethnic Uses

Cayenne Pepper is traditionally used in Mexican and Italian cooking.

Taste and Aroma

Cayenne Pepper has little aroma, but it is extremely hot to taste

CELERY SEED**General Description**

Celery Seed is the dried fruit of *Apium graveolens*, a biennial in the parsley family. This is the same genus and species used for growing table celery, although there are particular varieties that are used for the vegetable. The seeds are very small (about 1/16th of an inch), ovoid and light brown.

Geographical Sources

Celery Seed is grown in France and India.

Traditional Ethnic Uses

Celery or as the ancients called it "smallage" has been used as a medicine since the time of the Greeks. In the Middle Ages, it was discovered that cultivation produced a much superior plant. At that time people began to use it more widely as a vegetable. It was not until the 19th century that the seeds were used in recipes, appearing first in pickling recipes.

Taste and Aroma

Celery Seed tastes similar to table celery, with its warm, slightly bitter, aromatic flavor.

CHERVIL**General Description**

Chervil is a lightgreen, lacey, fernlike leaf of *Anthriscus cerefolium*, a lowgrowing member of the parsley family.

Geographical Sources

Chervil is grown in California and New Mexico.

Traditional Ethnic Uses

Chervil is one of the classic components of the popular French herb blend, fines herbes.

Taste and Aroma

The leaves of this aromatic and sweet herb bear a slight resemblance to parsley; however, the flavor is more distinctive with a trace of anise.

CHIVES**General Description**

Chives are the bright green, long, hollow, thin leaves of *Allium schoenoprasum*, an onionlike member of the lily family.

Geographical Sources

California

Traditional Ethnic Uses

Chives are one of the herbs used in fines herbes, a traditional French herb blend. They also are great as a garnish.

Taste and Aroma

Chives have a mild, onionlike flavor, with a hint of garlic.

CINNAMON**General Description**

Cinnamon is the dried bark of various laurel trees in the cinnamomun family. One of the more common trees from which Cinnamon is derived is the cassia. Ground cinnamon is perhaps the most common baking spice. Cinnamon sticks are made from long pieces of bark that are rolled, pressed, and dried.

Geographical Sources

True Cinnamon is native to Sri Lanka. The Cinnamon used in North America is from the cassia tree which is grown in Vietnam, China, Indonesia, and Central America.

Traditional Ethnic Uses

Possibly most the common baking spice, Cinnamon is used in cakes, cookies, and desserts throughout the world. Cinnamon is also used in savory chicken and lamb dishes from the Middle East. In American cooking, Cinnamon is often paired with apples and used in other fruit and cereal dishes. Stick Cinnamon is used in pickling and for flavoring hot beverages.

Taste and Aroma

Cinnamon has a sweet, woody fragrance in both ground and stick forms

CLOVES**General Description**

Cloves are the rich, brown, dried, unopened flower buds of *Syzygium aromaticum*, an evergreen tree in the myrtle family. The name comes from the French "clou" meaning nail.

Geographical Sources

Cloves come from Madagascar, Brazil, Panang, and Ceylon.

Traditional Ethnic Uses

Cloves are used in spice cookies and cakes. Much of the world crop is used in Indonesia for Clove cigarettes, called "kreteks".

Taste and Aroma

Cloves are strong, pungent, and sweet.

CORIANDER**General Description**

Coriander is the seed of *Coriandrum sativum*, a plant in the parsley family. The seed is globular and almost round, brown to yellow red, and 1/5 inch in diameter with alternating straight and wavy ridges.

Geographical Sources

Coriander comes from Morocco and Romania.

Traditional Ethnic Uses

Coriander is used in Indian curries, gin, American cigarettes, and sausages.

Taste and Aroma

Coriander has a mild, distinctive taste similar to a blend of lemon and sage.

CREAM OF TARTAR**General Description**

Cream of Tartar is a natural, pure ingredient left behind after grape juice has fermented to wine.

Geographical Sources

Cream of Tartar is obtained from wine producing regions.

Traditional Ethnic Uses

Cream of Tartar is used to stabilize egg white foams. It is also a major ingredient in baking powder.

Taste and Aroma

Cream of Tartar has no aroma and has an acidic flavor.

CUMIN**General Description**

Cumin (pronounced "comein") is the pale green seed of *Cuminum cyminum*, a small herb in the parsley family. The seed is uniformly elliptical and deeply furrowed.

Geographical Sources

Iran and India

Traditional Ethnic Uses

Cumin is frequently used in Mexican dishes such as chili con carne and hot tamales.

Taste and Aroma

Cumin has a distinctive, slightly bitter yet warm flavor.

CURRY POWDER**General Description**

Curry Powder is a blend of many spices and is used widely in savory dishes throughout India and Southeast Asia.

DILL WEED**General Description**

Dill is a tall, feathery annual, *Anethum graveolens*, in the parsley family. Both Dill Seed and Weed (dried leaves) come from the same plant.

Geographical Sources

United States and India

Traditional Ethnic Uses

Dill Seed and Weed are widely used in pickling as well as in German, Russian, and Scandinavian dishes.

Taste and Aroma

The Dill Seed flavor is clean, pungent, and reminiscent of caraway. Dill Weed has a similar but mellow and fresher flavor.

FENNEL**General Description**

Fennel Seed is the oval, green or yellowishbrown dried fruit of *Foeniculum vulgare*, a member of the parsley family.

Geographical Sources

India and Egypt

Traditional Ethnic Uses

Fennel goes well with fish and is used in Italian sausages and some curry powder mixes.

Taste and Aroma

Fennel has an aniselike flavor but is more aromatic, sweeter and less pungent.

JUNIPER BERRIES**General Description**

Juniper Berries come from the juniper shrub, an evergreen in the genus *juniperus*, which grows in the Northern Hemisphere.

Geographical Sources

Europe and North America

Traditional Ethnic Uses

Juniper Berries are used in Northern Europe and the United States in marinades, roast pork, and sauerkraut. They enhance meat, stuffings, sausages, stews, and soups.

Taste and Aroma

Juniper Berries have a bittersweet aroma.

MACE**General Description**

The nutmeg tree, *Myristica fragrans*, is special in that it produces two separate spices, nutmeg and Mace. Mace is the ground outer covering (aril) of the nutmeg seed. A piece of unground Mace is called a blade.

Geographical Sources

Indonesia, Grenada

Traditional Ethnic Uses

Mace is most popular in European foods where it is used in both savory and sweet dishes. It is the dominant flavor in doughnuts.

Taste and Aroma

Mace has a flavor and aroma similar to nutmeg, with slightly more pungency.

MARJORAM**General Description**

Marjoram is the graygreen leaf of *Majorana hortensis*, a low growing member of the mint family. It is often mistaken for oregano, although they are not the same plant.

Geographical Sources

United States and France

Traditional Ethnic Uses

Marjoram is used as a flavoring for meat dishes.

Taste and Aroma

Marjoram has a delicate, sweet, pleasant flavor with a slightly bitter undertone.

MUSTARD SEED**General Description**

Mustard Seed comes from two large shrubs, *Brassica juncea* (brown mustard) and *Brassica hirta* (white mustard), native to Asia. Both plants produce bright yellow flowers that contain small round seeds; brown mustard is more pungent than white.

Geographical Sources

Canada

Traditional Ethnic Uses

Mustard Seed's hot and spicy flavor enhances meats, fish, fowl, sauces, and salad dressings. Whole Mustard Seed may be used in pickling or in boiling vegetables such as cabbage or sauerkraut. Brown Mustard Seeds are an important flavoring in Indian dishes.

Taste and Aroma

Powdered Mustard has no aroma when dry, but a hot flavor is released when it is mixed with water.

General Description

Nutmeg is the seed of *Myristica fragrans*, an evergreen tree native to the Molucca Islands. Interestingly, the tree produces both Nutmeg and mace, and grows up to 60 feet tall. Although the tree takes seven years to bear fruit, it may produce until the 90th year. Both spices come from the tree's fruit, which splits into a scarlet outer membrane, mace, and an inner brown seed, Nutmeg.

Geographical Sources

Nutmeg is grown in Indonesia and Grenada.

Traditional Ethnic Uses

Nutmeg is a mild baking spice and is used in sausages, meats, soups, and preserves. Nutmeg is commonly added to eggnog, puddings, and fruit pies. It is popular in The Netherlands and Italy, where it is used in vegetables, puddings, and stews.

Taste and Aroma

Nutmeg is more pungent and sweeter than mace.

General Description

Mediterranean Oregano is the dried leaf of *Origanum vulgare* L., a perennial herb in the mint family. Mexican Oregano is the dried leaf of one of several plants of the *Lippia* genus.

Geographical Sources

Oregano is grown in California and New Mexico, as well as the Mediterranean region.

Traditional Ethnic Uses

Oregano is the spice that gives pizza its characteristic flavor. It is also usually used in chili powder.

Taste and Aroma

Oregano has a pungent odor and flavor. Mexican Oregano is a bit stronger than Mediterranean Oregano.

General Description

Paprika is a spice which comes from a mild red pepper in the family *Capsicum annum*. It is a brilliant red powder and often used as a garnish.

Geographical Sources

The peppers used in Paprika are grown in Hungary, Spain, South America, and California.

Traditional Ethnic Uses

Paprika is the main flavor in Hungarian cooking, including dishes such as Goulash and Chicken Paprikash. In the United States, it is often used as a garnish on stuffed eggs, fish, and cheese and vegetable casseroles. Spanish Paprika flavors shellfish, rice, and sausage dishes. In Morocco, Paprika is used in tomato dishes and salads.

Taste and Aroma

Paprika ranges from sweet and mild to hot. American Paprika is the blandest, while Hungarian Paprika has the greatest range of flavor.

General Description

Pepper is the dried berry of *Piper nigrum*. This vine which can grow up to ten feet tall is indigenous to India and Asia. Pepper is actually berries that are picked about nine months after flowering. (This is true pepper, and should not be confused with paprika, cayenne pepper, chili pepper, red pepper, and bell pepper, which are fruits from the *capiscum* family.) Black Pepper, the spiciest, is berries that are picked unripe. The berries used for White Pepper are ripened on the vine and soaked so that their outer hulls are easily removed. Green Peppercorns are immature berries which are freeze-dried or packed in brine for preservation.

Geographical Sources

Pepper is grown in India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brazil.

Traditional Ethnic Uses

Pepper is a universal table condiment used to flavor all types of dishes in cuisines worldwide. It's commonly used in stocks, pickling, and sausages.

Taste and Aroma

Black Pepper has a sharp, pungent aroma and flavor. White Pepper is hotter, less subtle and mildly fermented. Green Peppercorn is milder in flavor and has a fresh taste.

General Description

Poppy Seeds are tiny nuttytasting, bluegray seeds inside capsules on Papaver somniferum, a yellowishbrown opium plant indigenous to the Mediterranean.

Geographical Sources

Poppies are native to Mediterranean regions, India, China, Turkey, and Iran. Today, Holland and Canada are the main producers of poppy seeds.

Traditional Ethnic Uses

Poppy Seeds are used to flavor breads, cakes, rolls, and cookies in European and Middle Eastern cooking. In Turkey, they are often ground and used in desserts. In India, the seeds are ground and used to thicken sauces. The seeds are also used in noodle, fish, and vegetable dishes in Jewish, German, and Slavic cooking.

Taste and Aroma

Poppy Seeds have a slightly nutty aroma and taste.

General Description

Red Pepper is made from the ground fruit of a plant in the Capsicum family. The fruits, commonly known as "chilies" or "chili peppers," are fiery red or orange pods which rarely grow to more than 4 inches in length. The ground product ranges from orangered, to deep, dark red. According to the American Spice Trade Association, "Red Pepper" is the preferred name for all hot red pepper spices. Cayenne Pepper is another name for the same type of product. Some manufacturers use the term Cayenne Pepper to refer to a hotter version of Red Pepper.

Geographical Sources

China, Japan, India, Mexico, Africa, and Louisiana

Traditional Ethnic Uses

Red Pepper is used to achieve the characteristically hot flavor of Mexican, Creole, Cajun, Thai, Szechuan, and Indian cooking. It also is used in chili, Spanish rice, and barbecue sauce as well as meats, salads, and casseroles.

Taste and Aroma

Red pepper is a pungent, hot powder with a strong bite.

General Description

Rosemary is an herb in the mint family. It is a small evergreen shrub, Rosmarinus officinalis, whose 1inch leaves resemble curved pine needles.

Geographical Sources

Rosemary is native to the Mediterranean. Today it is widely produced in France, Spain, and Portugal.

Traditional Ethnic Uses

Rosemary is used primarily in Italy in lamb, pork, chicken, and rabbit dishes.

Taste and Aroma

Rosemary has a tealike aroma and a piney flavor.

General Description

Saffron is the stigma of *Crocus sativus*, a flowering plant in the crocus family. Saffron, the world's most expensive spice, is costly because more than 225,000 stigmas must be hand picked to produce one pound. In its pure form, saffron is a mass of compressed, threadlike, dark orange strands.

Geographical Sources

Saffron is native to the Mediterranean. Today it is cultivated primarily in Spain.

Traditional Ethnic Uses

Saffron is used in French bouillabaisse, Spanish paella, Milanese risotto, and many Middle Eastern dishes.

Taste and Aroma

Saffron has a spicy, pungent, and bitter flavor with a sharp and penetrating odor.

General Description

Sage is an herb from an evergreen shrub, *Salvia officinalis*, in the mint family. Its long, grayishgreen leaves take on a velvety, cottonlike texture when rubbed (meaning ground lightly and passed through a coarse sieve).

Geographical Sources

Sage is grown in the United States. It also is grown in Dalmatia and Albania.

Traditional Ethnic Uses

Sage enhances pork, lamb, meats, and sausages. Chopped leaves flavor salads, pickles, and cheese. It is one of the most popular herbs in the United States.

Taste and Aroma

Sage has a fragrant aroma and an astringent but warm flavor.

General Description

Sesame Seed is the seed of an annual herb, *Sesamum indicum*, which grows well in hot climates. Sesame Seed is the most commonly produced seed. The yellowish, red, or black seeds are used in bread products, stir-fries, Jewish and Chinese confectionaries, and Middle Eastern dishes.

Geographical Sources

Africa and Indonesia

Traditional Ethnic Uses

Sesame Seed has been enjoyed by humans since the dawn of civilization. It is used in breads, candies, main dishes, as a garnish on pasta and vegetables, and for its oil content.

Taste and Aroma

Sesame Seeds have a nut-like, mild flavor.

General Description

Summer Savory is an annual herb, *Satureja hotenis*, belonging to the mint family. Its dark-green, narrow leaves are dried and crushed.

Geographical Sources

United States and Yugoslavia

Traditional Ethnic Uses

Summer Savory enhances almost any savory dish. It goes well with soups, stews, bean dishes of any sort, succotash, cabbage, and sauerkraut.

Taste and Aroma

Summer Savory has a clean, piney fragrance and peppery flavor.

General Description

Tarragon is a small, shrubby herb, *Artemisia dracunculus*, in the sunflower family. Two species are cultivated, Russian and French. Leaves of the French variety are glossier and more pungent. Most commercial Tarragon comes from dried leaves of the French Tarragon plant.

Geographical Sources

Tarragon is native to southern Russia and western Asia. Today, its primary producer is France.

Traditional Ethnic Uses

Tarragon is commonly known as a flavoring for vinegar and is used in pickles, relishes, prepared mustards, and sauces. Tarragon also goes well with fish, meat, soups and stews, and is often used in tomato and egg dishes. Tarragon adds distinctive flavor to sauces.

Taste and Aroma

Tarragon has a slightly bittersweet flavor and an aroma similar to anise

General Description

Thyme is the leaf of a low-growing shrub in the mint family called *Thymus vulgaris*. Its tiny grayish-green leaves rarely are greater than one-fourth inch long. For use as a condiment, Thyme leaves are dried then chopped, or ground.

Geographical Sources

Thyme is grown in southern Europe, including France, Spain, and Portugal. It is also indigenous to the Mediterranean.

Traditional Ethnic Uses

Thyme is often included in seasoning blends for poultry and stuffing and also commonly used in fish sauces, chowders, and soups. It goes well with lamb and veal as well as in eggs, custards, and croquettes. Thyme often is paired with tomatoes.

Taste and Aroma

Thyme has a subtle, dry aroma and a slightly minty flavor.

General Description

Turmeric comes from the root of *Curcuma longa*, a leafy plant in the ginger family. The root, or rhizome, has a tough brown skin and bright orange flesh. Ground Turmeric comes from fingers which extend from the root. It is boiled or steamed and then dried, and ground.

Geographical Sources

India is the world's primary producer of Turmeric. It is also grown in China and Indonesia.

Traditional Ethnic Uses

Turmeric is a necessary ingredient of curry powder. It is used extensively in Indian dishes, including lentil and meat dishes, and in Southeast Asian cooking. Turmeric is routinely added to mustard blends and relishes. It also is used in place of saffron to provide color and flavor.

Taste and Aroma

Turmeric is mildly aromatic and has scents of orange or ginger. It has a pungent, bitter flavor.