




Keyword Search

**Learning about Spices**

- [What is a spice?](#)
- [Why were spices important?](#)
- [Sources of spices](#)
- [Perfumes and Incenses](#)
- [Use of spices as aphrodisiacs](#)
- [Use of spices as medicines](#)
- [Culinary herbs](#)
- [A spice timeline](#)

**Table of Spices**

- [Allspice \(Pimento\)](#)
- [Anise](#)
- [Black Pepper](#)
- [Cardamom](#)
- [Cassia](#)
- [Chile Pepper](#)
- [Chocolate](#)
- [Cinnamon](#)
- [Clove](#)
- [Coriander \(Cilantro\)](#)
- [Cumin](#)
- [Dill](#)
- [Fennel](#)
- [Fenugreek](#)
- [Frankincense and Myrrh](#)
- [Galangal](#)
- [Garlic](#)
- [Ginger](#)
- [Horseradish](#)
- [Licorice](#)
- [Mustard](#)
- [Nutmeg and Mace](#)
- [Onion](#)
- [Saffron](#)
- [Sugar](#)
- [Sumac](#)
- [Tamarind](#)
- [Turmeric](#)
- [Vanilla](#)

[Contacts and Acknowledgments](#)

Common Name **TURMERIC**  
 Genus Species *Curcuma longa*  
 Family [Zingiberaceae](#)  
 Origin Southern Asia  
 Cultivated India (especially the south central states), southern and eastern China, Taiwan, Philippines, Java, Haiti, Jamaica, Peru



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**Description** The root of *Curcuma longa* is ground up to provide the yellow dye and flavor known as haldi in India and turmeric in the West. It is cultivated in several countries in south-eastern Asia, and is widely used as an appetite stimulant and digestive in various sauces, and as a rice colorant and a standard curry constituent, or as an inexpensive substitute for saffron. The spice has become more popular recently as a source of the yellow turmerone, curcumin: this is believed to have antioxidant, anti-inflammatory and anticholesterolemic properties. Herbalists advise that it be used to prevent heart disease and cancer, and to treat HIV infection and arthritis. In Chinese medicine, it is used to control hemorrhage, and to treat various diseases such as asthma and coryza. Curcumin is often added to food products as a colorant and to prevent their spoilage by oxidation. See a list of spices by [Taste and Hotness](#).

**Useful Parts** The rhizome is harvested and ground to make the spice.

**Medicinal Properties** Although none of the alleged benefits have been adequately evaluated, turmeric and curcumin are increasingly being promoted as health products. [See chemicals in spices.](#)

**Historical View** "Turmeric is not now used as a remedial agent; but is introduced into the pharmacopoeias as a test to the presence of alkalis, its action on which has just been noticed."

Bentley, Robert and Henry Trimen. *Medicinal Plants; being descriptions with original figures of the principal plants employed in medicine and an account of the characters, properties, and uses of their parts and products of medicinal value.* London, Churchill, 1880. (WZ 295 B556m 1880)



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Spice Exhibit URL: <http://unitproj.library.ucla.edu/biomed/spice/index.cfm>

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