

# *Curcuma longa*

**Common Name** – Turmeric (Haldi)

## **Abstract**

**Turmeric** is a flowering plant, *Curcuma longa* of the ginger family, Zingiberaceae, the roots of which are used in cooking. The plant is a perennial, rhizomatous, herbaceous plant native to the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia, that requires temperatures between 20 and 30 °C (68 and 86 °F) and a considerable amount of annual rainfall to thrive. Plants are gathered each year for their rhizomes, some for propagation in the following season and some for consumption.

The rhizomes are used fresh or boiled in water and dried, after which they are ground into a deep orange-yellow powder commonly used as a coloring and flavoring agent in many Asian cuisines, especially for curries, as well as for dyeing. Turmeric powder has a warm, bitter, black pepper-like flavor and earthy, mustard-like aroma.

Although long used in Ayurvedic medicine, where it is also known as *haridra* no high-quality clinical evidence exists for use of turmeric or its constituent, curcumin, as a therapy.

## **Uses**

Turmeric is one of the key ingredients in many Asian dishes, imparting a mustard-like, earthy aroma and pungent, slightly bitter flavor to foods. It is used mostly in savory dishes, but also is used in some sweet dishes, such as the cake sfouf. In India, turmeric leaf is used to prepare special sweet dishes, patoleo, by layering rice flour and coconut-jaggery mixture on the leaf, then closing and steaming it in a special utensil. Most turmeric is used in the form of rhizome powder to impart a golden yellow color. It is used in many products such as canned beverages, baked products, dairy products, ice cream, yogurt, yellow cakes, orange juice, biscuits, popcorn color, cereals, sauces, and gelatin. It is a principal ingredient in curry powders. Although typically used in its dried, powdered form, turmeric also is used fresh, like ginger. It has numerous uses in East Asian recipes, such as pickle that contains large chunks of soft turmeric, made from fresh turmeric.

Turmeric is used widely as a spice in South Asian and Middle Eastern cooking. Various Iranian khoresh dishes are started using onions caramelized in oil and turmeric, followed by other ingredients. The Moroccan spice mix typically includes turmeric. In South Africa, turmeric is used to give boiled white rice a golden color, known as geelrys (yellow rice) traditionally served with bobotie. In Vietnamese cuisine, turmeric powder is used to color and enhance the flavors of certain dishes, such as bánh xèo, bánh khọt, and mì quang. The staple Cambodian curry paste, kroeung, used in many dishes including amok, typically contains fresh turmeric. In Indonesia, turmeric leaves are used for Minang or Padang curry base of Sumatra, such as rendang, sate padang, and many other varieties. In Thailand, fresh turmeric rhizomes are used widely in many dishes, in particular in the southern Thai cuisine, such as yellow curry and turmeric soup. Turmeric is used in a hot drink called "turmeric latte" or "golden milk" that is made with milk, frequently coconut milk.[28] The turmeric milk drink known as haldi doodh (haldi means turmeric in Hindi) is a South Asian

recipe. Sold in the US and UK, the drink known as "golden mylk" uses nondairy milk and sweetener, and sometimes black pepper after the traditional recipe (which may also use ghee).