

Content at a glance

11.1 Importance of spices and condiments in diet

11.2 Use of spices and condiments in cookery

India is considered to be the 'Home of spices'. Traders and business persons from various parts of the world heard about a variety of spices available in India and so they visited India. Even today, spices are a valuable source of getting foreign exchange.

In Indian diet spices and condiments play an important role. A well cooked garnished and nutritionally balanced diet without spices may not be acceptable, because of its insipidity. Same diet, if it is improved by adding various flavouring agents and spices will be highly appreciated by majority of the people. It will become more acceptable and palatable.



Fig. 11.1 Spices

Definition : Spices and Condiments are those substances such as natural plants or vegetable products (any part of plant) or their mixture in whole or ground form, which impart flavour, aroma and pungency to the food preparation.



Fig. 11.2 Parts of plants used as spices

11.1 Importance of spices and condiments in diet

- Spices impart flavour and colour to the food and therefore increases the palatability.
- Use of different spices in food preparation brings variety in the diet and avoids monotony e.g. cumin seeds in *jeera* fried rice, saffron in sweet coconut rice, *biryani masala* in *biryani* and others.
- Some spices stimulate secretion of digestive enzymes and helps in digestion.e.g. ginger.
- Some spices like garlic when consumed in diet reduce serum cholesterol levels and may decrease the risk of heart disease.
- Some spices in diet act as antioxidants whereas others have antibacterial properties e.g. asafoetida, nutmeg, clove and turmeric.
- Now a days, variety of readymade spice mixes are available in the market e.g. *pulao masala*, *sambhar masala*, and *milk masala* etc.



Fig.11.3 Whole spices

11.2 Use of spices and condiments in cookery

- i) **Colour Improver:** Pleasant, colourful, well arranged buffet table attracts people and stimulates them to eat food. Different colours improve the appearance of food and hence the food becomes more attractive and appealing. e.g. turmeric in savoury dishes, red chillies in pickle, saffron in sweets and coriander in green chutney.
- ii) **Decorating Agent:** Indian cooks are artists in using spices and condiments as a decorating agent. A seasoning of mustard seeds on dhokla, cardamom seeds on burfi and shrikhand, clove on betal leaf or coriander leaves on *raita*, *dal*, vegetable are some of the examples where spices make the dishes more attractive.
- iii) **Flavouring Agent:** The primary function of spices is to improve the flavour of food. Many spices such as cloves, coriander,

cumin seeds, cinnamon etc, because of their volatile oil content impart various flavours to the food. These flavouring compounds are soluble in fat, therefore spices should be added to hot oil as a seasoning. Spices appeal to the sense of smell and food is not accepted unless it is adequately spiced e.g. cardamom, saffron, nutmeg is used in sweet preparations such as shrikhand and burfi, vanilla essence is used in cake mixes and asafoetida is used as seasoning in preparations such as *kadhi*, *dal* and vegetables.

- iv) **Appetizers:** Some spices and condiments stimulate the digestive juices which work as an appetizer or produce the hunger pangs. An aroma of a simmering curry serves this purpose.

Spices like pepper, mint, cumin seeds, ginger are used in various appetizing beverages like

soup and *jaljira*. These should be used in limited amounts. If they are used in excess, they may depress the hunger, instead of stimulating it due to the strong flavour.

v) **Thickening Agent:** Some spices and condiments contain carbohydrates especially starch, hence they give thickness to gravy. Onion, poppy seeds, coconut, garlic and ginger paste are used to thicken the gravies.

vi) **Food preservative:** Apart from other functions, some spices and condiments are helpful for preserving the foods. They are used widely in commercial as well as home scale production of sauces, ketchups and chutneys.

vii) **Digestibility improver:** Spices and condiments have physiological action beneficial to our digestive system. They act as stimulus to the digestive system and help digestion in many ways. e.g. use of ginger and asafoetida in buttermilk, omum (ajwain) in bhajiya or pepper in soup increases the digestibility.

viii) **Medicinal use:** The therapeutic value of spices is well known. Spices and herbs play a very important role in some of the simple but effective home remedies. Almost every spice has medicinal properties. e.g. garlic is used in treatment of numerous diseases such as rheumatism, dermatitis, abdominal pain, cough, loss of appetite and hypertension.

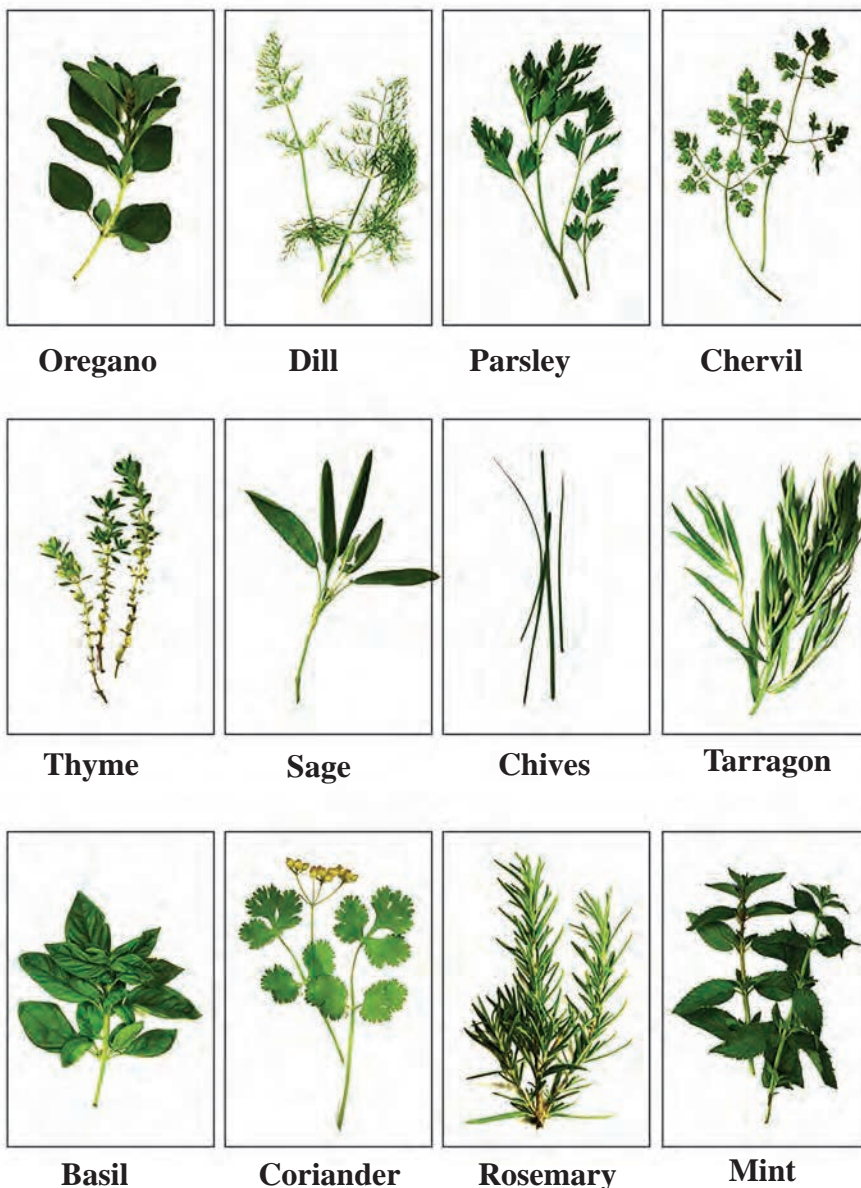


Fig. 11.4 Culinary Herbs

Studies of clove oil have shown that it stimulates the flow of gastric juices. Dry ginger, nutmeg, saffron helps in treating colds. Turmeric powder is used as an antiseptic agent.

Do You Know?

What is the difference between Spices and Herbs?

Spices are aromatic part of plant usually the dried buds, fruits, berries, roots or bark while Herbs are leaves of fresh and dried plants. Spices have stronger flavour than herbs. Since they are stronger they are used sparingly.

Activity- To make your own Masala

Each spice has its own peculiar taste and flavour. But these spices can be mixed or blended to make spice mixes or 'Masalas'. Great care has to be taken while blending the spice. It can be done through various ways such as broiling, frying in oil, grating and grinding the spice to a powder form

Here we are making the following masalas popularly used in cuisines.

	Chaat Masala	Chana Masala	Goda Masala
Ingredients	Cumin, peppercorn, black salt, dry mint leaves, kasoori methi, green cardamom, cloves, cinnamon, asafoetida, tartaric acid, mace and dried mango powder	Coriander, cumin, red chillies, ginger powder, dried mango powder, cinnamon, black pepper, black cardamom, garlic, cubeb pepper (Pipli), nutmeg, clove, mace, dried pomegranate seeds.	Coriander, sesame, dry grated coconut, dried red chillies, cinnamon, asafoetida, star anise, bay leaf, pepper corn, saffron
Method	The masala is cooked by broiling the spices individually and grinding them to a smooth fine powder.	The spices are roasted and grinded to get the desired flavour.	The spices are lightly fried one by one by heating with little oil in a pan, and grind then into powder.
Use	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Used mostly in <i>Chaats</i>. 2. Added to many other masala blends. 3. Sprinkled on many snacks like <i>Paneer Pakodas</i>, <i>bhajiyas</i> etc. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Used mostly as a flavouring agent in chickpea curry in Punjab. 2. Also used in making pinde chole. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regional masala of Maharashtra. 2. This spice blend is used to flavour meat and vegetables.
Example Application	 	 	 

Points to remember

- Spices and condiments impart flavour aroma and piquancy to food preparation
- Spices are colour improver
- Spices are used as decorating agent
- Spices also work as an appetizer.
- Spices increase the digestibility
- Spices also have medicinal value
- Herbs are leaves of fresh and dried plant

Exercise

Q. 1 (a) Select the most appropriate option:

- i. _____ improves the colour of the pickle.
(Coriander powder, red chilli powder, fenugreek seeds)
- ii. In shrikhand _____ is used to enhance the flavour.
(Cardamom, cloves, cinnamon)
- iii. In gravies, _____ is used as a thickening agent.
(Cumin seeds, cloves, poppy seeds)
- iv. Spice that helps in treatment of cold is _____.
(Onion, dry ginger, garlic)

(b) Match the following:

A		B	
i.	Saffron	a.	Soup
ii.	Pepper	b.	Volatile oil
iii.	Cloves	c.	Wet Spices
iv.	Asafoetida	d.	Flavouring and colouring agent
v.	Onion	e.	Seasoning agent
		f.	Improve digestibility

(c) State whether the following statements are true or false:

- i. Spices and condiments are mainly added to improve the nutritive value of food.
- ii. Spices should not be used in limited amounts.
- iii. Spices create variety in taste.
- iv. Herbs are roots of plants.

Q. 2 Answer the following in one word

- i. Name a spice that is used as an appetizer.

- ii. Name the component present in spice which imparts flavour.
- iii. Name a spice used as an antiseptic

- iii. Give the difference between Spices and Herbs.
- iv. Give the importance of spices and condiments in diet.

Q. 3 Short answer questions

(a) Give reasons

- i. Poppy seeds help in thickening the gravies.
- ii. Pepper and mint help in increasing the appetite.

(b) Answer in brief

- i. List the uses of spices in cookery.
- ii. Define spices.

Q. 4 Long answer question

- i. Explain in detail all the uses of spices and condiments.

❖ Project

- Collect information about ten spices with their photographs and make an album of it.
- Visit to any manufacturing unit of 'Ready mix masala' and prepare a detailed report on it.

