

Spices of India Participant Handout



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Spices have been an important part of seasoning in foods throughout the world. Spices, herbs and essential oils have been the foundation for flavorings that define the wide range of cultures and their cuisines throughout the world. Unless we have been exposed to these flavorings and smells, they may be “exotic” or “foreign” or “stinky.” In today’s world, we have more opportunities to experience cuisines that are new and different. Sometimes flavors have to be experienced several times to appreciate them. Eventually we enjoy the new seasonings and find them delicious. This is often the case of spices from India.

Many of these spices, herbs, and oils have been used not only for flavoring, but also for health and medicinal purposes. Some of these are being examined more carefully by researchers and western medical practitioners.

A “Spicy” History

Spices have a history of having tremendous commercial value and include a long and very bloody history. Spices were brought to the eastern Mediterranean and into Europe for at least 5000 years along the caravan routes which passed through the Middle East.

To gain greater access to these spices without having to go through traditional routes, countries in Europe searched to find new shipping routes to the East. Bloody competition among the English, Dutch, French and Portuguese was the result.

Much ancient and medieval history is based on the spice trade. All of the common spices have been available to cooks in the Mediterranean area since the beginning of written record and were exceedingly expensive.

Pepper, ginger, cloves, cinnamon, and nutmeg may be found in the cooking of almost every country of the world today except for very primitive people. How these spices are used by various cuisines often define those cuisines. For example, cardamom that is a very important spice in India. This spice is used very differently in Indian cuisine (curries) than in Scandinavian cuisines (cardamom bread).

Health and medicinal use of spices and herbs of India

As in many cultures throughout the world, Indians have used herbs and spices in their health practices. The Indian form of medicine using herbals including spices is “Ayurvedic medicine”.

There has been a lot of research in the recent years that include herbs and spices and compounds found in these that may be beneficial. Much of the research is preliminary or may show positive results in the laboratory and in animal studies, however definitive studies have not been done in humans. Other research has shown some compounds that have good results in human studies, but need to be carefully managed.

One thing we do know, these herbs and spices are **great in food**, and we can enjoy them in the quantities used in food. Caution should be taken in taking concentrated amounts in supplements.

A Look at the Herbs and Spices of India

Individual Herbs and Spices:

Spices and herbs are used abundantly in Indian cooking. We will just be scratching the surface of Indian flavors because most of these are used in combination with other spices, thus making very complex flavors.

- Ajwain seed* – Also known as ajowan or carom; a seed closely related to caraway and cumin. It looks like celery seed, but has a strong thyme flavor as it contains thymol (the pungent oil of thyme). These seeds are used cooking, breads, biscuits, savory pastries, and in bean dishes. Relieves flatulence and stomachache.
- Allspice (originated from the New World, but used in Indian cooking) – Used whole or ground to flavor vegetables, curry powder blends, and pickles (aids digestion).
- Anise seed and/or fennel seed (sounf) – Has a licorice flavor and is used widely in Kashmiri cuisine. Used to flavor some curries. Seeds can be chewed as a mouth-freshener after a spicy meal and also aids digestion.
- Asafoetida (Hing)* – A pale yellow to dark brown dried gum resin. Sold in pieces or ground, it is an acquired taste and used to season seafood and legume (dal) dishes. Because of its pungent flavor (sulfur compounds) only a pinch is usually added to hot oil and allowed to sizzle for just a few seconds before other ingredients are added. Gives a garlic/onion flavor to dishes. Used mostly in vegetarian dishes. Aids digestion and relieves flatulence.
- Basil – Highly aromatic herb of the mint family imparts a fragrant and rich flavor to dishes. The Indian variety has small egg-shaped leaves and is called holy basil. Any basil can be used in its place. Used for digestion, insect bites, and respiratory ailments.
- Bay leaves – Used to flavor rice mixtures (pilao), biryani, curry and kebab dishes. It is one of five important spices (cardamom, cinnamon, cloves, and peppercorns are the other four) used in rice and biryani dishes to give them their distinctive flavor and delicate fragrance). See recipe following for turmeric rice. Prized for digestive and appetite stimulants.
- Black salt* – A rock salt with distinctive flavor and odor. Dark brown or pinkish gray in color and available in powdered form. Important in Northern Indian cooking.
- Caraway seeds – Used to season breads, pickles, and vegetables
- Cardamom (pods, black, green) – One of the most prized spices after saffron. Pods come in two varieties, green and black. The small pale green and beige pods have a finer flavor than the coarser brown (black) pods which have a nuttier flavor. Pods are used whole to flavor many dishes, while the ground cardamom is used in curry powder and to favoring puddings and other sweet dishes. Since the flavor resides in the small seeds, crush the whole pods before using them. In America the green pods are often bleached and puffed which take away from the aroma and flavor. Seeds are chewed to aid digestion and to freshen the palate. *This spice is less expensive at Indian markets.
- *Chilies, dried red – Used to enhance the flavor of curries. These are used whole as well as crushed and ground. Ground cayenne can be used as a substitute in recipes. Most chilies are quite hot, though you can remove the seeds to make them less fiery.



Photo from freedigitalphotos.net

- *Chilies, fresh green – An important ingredient and used in almost all chutneys, vegetable snacks, curry, vegetable and legume dishes. Seeds can be discarded to make them less hot, but they add flavor (and bite) to the dish. Capsaicin is the active ingredient in chilies that is promoted with health implications.
- Cinnamon – One of the earliest known spices. It has an aromatic and sweet flavor and is sold as ground or in sticks. Sticks are added for flavor and then removed before eaten. Ground cinnamon is an important seasoning in many dishes and an important ingredient in making curry powder and garam marsala.
- Cloves – Dried, unopened flower buds dark red-brown in color. It flavors many sweet and savory dishes and is usually added whole. It is also used in spiced mixtures like garam marsala. Whole cloves and clove oil are used in home remedies for tooth and gum problems.
- Coriander seeds – Available whole or ground, are aromatic and have a slightly sweet, lemony flavor. They are used a great deal in vegetable and meat dishes. Roasted ground coriander is used frequently to flavor yogurt salads (raitas). Cilantro – Fresh, fragrant leaves of the coriander is used as a garnish on many dishes. Does not dry or freeze well, use fresh.
- Coconut – The coconut is popularly used in the south Indian and Goan cuisine. Freshly grated coconut, coconut milk, coconut cream, coconut oil, the clear liquid inside it – almost all parts of it are used to give an interesting and unmistakable flavor in various dishes.
- Cumin seeds – “White” seeds are oval, ridged and greenish brown in color and come whole or ground. They have a distinct odor and flavor. Whole seeds are usually toasted to flavor vegetable and rice dishes. Ground cumin is used in northern Indian recipes for yogurt salads. Cumin seeds are used in treating digestive disorders, morning sickness, insomnia and flatulence.

Black (royal) cumin seeds*– Resemble caraway seeds and are smaller, sweeter-smelling and darker variety than most cumin seeds. From Kashmir and very prized and exotic. It is used whole and does not require toasting. Used whole and available only at Indian markets.

- Curry leaves – Similar in appearance to bay leaves but much smaller and are available fresh or dried. Fresh leaves freeze well and are preferred. Curry leaves have a distinct aroma and are used to flavor rice, curry dishes, South Indian dishes, and chutneys. Leaves are a mild laxative and also effective in treating morning sickness and diarrhea.
- Fenugreek seeds – Flat seeds, pale mustard in color and have a bitter taste but when cooked become a great flavor enhancer. They are available whole or ground and are used to flavor South Indian dal and vegetable dishes and pickles; they are also an ingredient in South Indian curry powders. Fresh leaves are also used as a vegetable. Indians use for the treating of indigestion, flatulence, diabetes, respiratory infections, and skin irritations.
- Flower essences (rose water, khus or sandalwood)*– Concentrated flavorings that are used to flavor Mughal-style dishes (a style of cooking in North India, Pakistan and Bangladesh). The most common use is rose water—a diluted form of rose essence. It is used to flavor desserts, biryanis, and yogurt drinks (lassi).
- Garlic – A standard ingredient, along with ginger and onion in almost every curry, legume or vegetable dish. It can be pulped, crushed or chopped. The powder is mainly used in spice mixtures. It is used extensively in Ayurveda medicine as a treatment for numerous maladies.
- Ginger – A very important and popular spice in Indian cooking. Ground ginger is almost never used in Indian cooking if fresh is possibly available. This rhizome is always peeled before using. The flavor of ginger might be delicate but it manages to stand out in a crowd

of other ingredients in any dish. It is used widely in both vegetarian and meat-based dishes. Minced ginger freezes very well. Ginger tea is drunk all over India to cure sore throats.

- Mango powder * - Dried flesh of green mangos that has a sour flavor. Used instead of lime or lemon.
- Mint leaves – Fresh or dried, used as a flavoring herb and keeps mouth fresh. Used in curries, biryanis, kormas and chutneys
- Mustard seeds - yellow, brown and black – Available whole or ground. Sharp-flavored and used to flavor curries and relishes. Whole black mustard seeds are most commonly used in Indian cooking. They are generally sautéed to give flavor to vegetable and legume dishes and chutneys. The sharp flavor mellows when fried. Ground mustard is used in some curry powder blends and seafood dishes. In northern India mustard oil is used for pickling vegetables. The leaves of mustard are also eaten as a vegetable.
- Nigella (onion seeds—not a real onion) * – These seeds have nothing to do with the onion family, they just look like onion seeds and have a mild, oregano-like flavor. Similar in size and shape to sesame seeds and are used as a pickling spice and are sprinkled over bread (nan).
- Nutmeg – This seed is used sparingly, added to rich and sweet dishes. It is more popular added to various spice blends than by itself. Gives a sweet nutty flavor to dishes. Buy it whole and grind or grate. Mace – The lacy covering of nutmeg is mace and is available whole or ground. It is used to season curries, biryanis, kormas and desserts.
- Onions – Used in practically every dish; they are also pickled or eaten raw. Like garlic and ginger, onions are an important ingredient in curries and determine the consistency of the curry sauce. Generally they are ground with other spices or sautéed in oil. In India, onions are often used to treat circulatory disorders.
- Paprika – A rust-red powder which has a sweetish pungent taste and adds great favor and color. Used in tandoori dishes and curry sauces and used widely in Kashmiri cuisine in meat curries, koftas and kababs. Sweet Hungarian paprika is very similar to Indian.
- Peppercorns, black – Used whole, coarsely crushed, and ground to season many dishes. Green berries are dried in the sun, shrivel and turn black. White peppercorns are made by soaking in water, removing the black skin and re-drying them. Used for digestion, sore throats and sinuses.
- Pomegranate seeds * – Available dried and powdered. Have a spicy, tangy flavor which many cooks in north India use in vegetable and legume dishes. Add a rich brown color to dishes. They give flavoring to fillings in samosas, pakoras, and yogurt salads.
- Poppy seeds – These whole tiny white seeds are usually toasted to bring out flavor and sometimes used as a thickening agent. Refrigerate and use within 3-4 months.
- Saffron – The world's most expensive spice used to color and flavor many dishes. It is the dried stigmas of the saffron crocus. Used as a thread or in powdered form, only a small amount is needed to flavor the dish. Imparts a lovely yellow color and great flavor.
- Sesame seeds – Small cream-colored seeds with a slightly nutty taste after roasting. They are used whole or ground. High protein seed often found as coatings on special desserts and candies.
- Tamarind – A dried pod that is available in pulp, cake or concentrate form which is soaked and strained before use. It is used extensively in southern India as a souring agent in preparation of legumes, vegetable dishes, and chutneys. It has a cooling effect on the body and is a mild laxative.

- **Turmeric** – Bright yellow/orange, bitter-tasting spice sold ground. It is a rhizome that can be found in a few produce markets. It is extensively in Indian cooking both to color and to flavor legume, vegetable, curry, rice and seafood dishes. It is highly regarded as a home remedy for various health problems. To the Hindus, turmeric is a sacred spice and used in every religious ceremony.

Spice combinations

The basic art of Indian cooking lies in the careful blending of different spices to yield subtle variations in the flavor of foods. They also intensify flavors of almost every kind of food.

Varying blends of spices in Indian cooking is called “masala.” It can be in the form of a powder or paste. Curry powders (kari masala) and garam masala are important in Indian cooking. Curry powders can be almost any combination of spices, and most home cooks have their own blends, ground fresh right before use. For cooks with less time, you can buy these spices already blended.

Curry powders and dry masala blends retain their flavor for up to six months when stored in **airtight** jars. Pastes must be stored in the refrigerator in airtight containers, and they retain their flavor for about one month.

Curry powder – A blend of several spices which are ground into a fine powder and sometimes into a paste with fresh onion, garlic and gingerroot. These vary in flavor and color. Curries may include some or all of these spices: ground turmeric, ground dried red chilies, coriander seeds, black pepper, cumin seeds, fenugreek seeds, curry leaves, mustard seeds, cinnamon, cardamom, cloves, nutmeg, peppercorns, and bay leaves.

Garam masala – (hot spice) Hundreds of spice mixtures are used daily in kitchens all over India to give surprisingly different flavors to food – garam masala is one of the most common. It gives a strong distinctive aroma and taste to the food. It combines cumin seeds, coriander seeds, black peppercorns, cloves, cardamom seeds, dried bay leaves, cinnamon stick and dried red chili. There’s no fixed ‘recipe’ as such, which will tell you exactly how much of each you have to use; every house has its own mix. All the ingredients mentioned are commonly used in Indian cooking.

Paanch phoran (Bengali) – a mixture or combination of five different aromatic spices – black mustard seeds, black cumin seeds, nigella, fenugreek seeds and fennel seeds – used to flavor legume and vegetable dishes.

Other spice mixtures – There are many more masalas or spice blends, such as tandoori, channa, chaat, and more. Recipes can be found for these and used in specific dishes.

Where to find these spices and herbs

Many of these spices and herbs can be found in the supermarket, but many are only in Asian or specifically Indian markets. In the list above, those spices that might only be found in an Indian market are identified with this symbol: *

Almost all of these flavoring can be purchased online. Here are two sources:

The Spice House: This website has good information about each spice and includes recipes with most of the seasonings. <http://www.thespicehouse.com/>

Penzeys Spices: Includes some recipes. Three retail stores are located in the Portland area (Close to Clackamas Town Center, Beaverton and Pearl District). Go online to find the specific address. <http://www.penzeys.com>

Grow your own spices?

Bay leaf: Try growing a culinary bay, but be sure to get the right species. Fresh bay is so much better than dried. This is a tender perennial, so plant in a shelter area of the garden. In Eastern Oregon, you may need to bring it into a sheltered area for the winter months.



Ginger or turmeric: Both of these can be grown in pots or in a greenhouse. They make large decorative plants and the rhizomes can be harvested every fall, or whenever the root system can handle a trim. They are usually harvested when the plants go dormant. Some farmers' market vendors in the Willamette Valley offer fresh ginger for sale in the late summer and fall.

Using and Cooking with Spices

Getting the most flavors possible from spices -- Toast or bloom spices to help release the volatile oils and fullest flavor:

Toast/Roast: (For whole spices to be ground later.) Put the whole spice into a small skillet without any oil and place over medium heat. Stir constantly to prevent scorching and toast until they are fragrant (3-5 minutes) and are a shade darker than their original color. Cool slightly before grinding. Sometimes ground spices are toasted, but watch closely so the spices do not burn.

Bloom: (To intensify flavors of ground spices.) Cook ground spices for a minute or two in a little clarified butter (ghee) or oil before any liquid is added to the recipe. If the recipe calls for sautéing onions or other aromatics, add the spices when the vegetables are nearly cooked. This step is particularly important with spice mixtures where it is crucial to develop complex flavors. You will see this in many Indian recipes. Whole spices can also be bloomed in oil or butter. The whole spices are discarded before dish is served (bay leaf, cinnamon stick, cardamom pod, cloves).

Grinding Spices

In Indian cooking, many of the spice mixtures can be made at home, resulting in a much fresher product. To get the benefits of the whole spice, you need to use a device that yields a fine, even powder. There are many gadgets available, but the best tool is a coffee grinder. It will produce good results with little effort. It is recommended to keep one coffee grinder for coffee and another for spices.

To clean a spice grinder, wipe with a brush or cloth. However, if spice residues remain, add several tablespoons of raw white rice to the grinder and pulverize to a fine powder. The rice powder will absorb residual spice particles and oils. Discard the rice powder.

Buying and Storing Spices

In most cases, purchasing whole spices and grinding them is preferable to buying ground spices. Whole spices have a longer shelf life (twice that of ground spices), and most have superior aroma and flavor. Whether whole or ground, buy in smallest quantities as available and check the expiration date.

When storing spices, store in a cool, dark dry place in a well-sealed container. Use stick on dots with the name of the spice and date of purchase on the top of the spice jar, especially if stored in a drawer.

Source: Cooks Illustrated, November & December 2009

Recipes featuring spices of India

Basic Garam Masala (Yield: 1 cup)

Ingredients:

1 cup black cardamom pods, pods removed and discarded
5 cinnamon sticks, broken into small pieces
¼ cup black peppercorn
¼ cup caraway or cumin seeds
2 tablespoons whole cloves
¼ whole nutmeg, grated

Directions:

In a small heavy-bottomed frying pan or on an iron griddle, roast all of the ingredients over medium heat, stirring constantly until the spices become a shade darker (4-5 minutes).

Remove pan from heat and transfer the spices to a spice or coffee grinder. Grind to a fine powder. Store in an airtight jar.

From "Feast of India", Rani

Basic Curry Powder (Kari Masala)

Ingredients:

1 tablespoon coriander seeds
1 teaspoon cumin seeds
1 teaspoon ground turmeric
½ teaspoon ground dried red chilies

Directions:

In a small, heavy-bottomed frying pan or on an iron griddle, roast all of the ingredients over medium heat, stirring constantly until the spices become a shade darker (4-5 minutes). Remove the pan from the heat and transfer the spices to a spice or coffee grinder. Grind to a fine powder. Store in an airtight jar.

From "Feast of India", Rani

Sweet Vermicelli Pudding (Serves 6-8)

Ingredients:

1 cup fine vermicelli
½ teaspoon saffron threads
2¼ cups milk
¼ cup margarine or vegetable oil
¾ cup sugar
¼ cup slivered blanched almonds
¼ cup golden raisins
½ teaspoon ground cardamom

Directions:

1. Break the vermicelli into 1- to 2-inch pieces to make stirring easy. Soak the saffron threads in ¼ cup hot milk for 15 minutes.
2. Heat the margarine in a saucepan. Add the vermicelli and fry over medium heat for 4-5 minutes until golden brown, stirring as the color changes. Add the milk and bring to a boil, stirring occasionally. Add the saffron milk and stir.
3. Cover, reduce the heat, and simmer gently for 7-8 minutes, until vermicelli is tender, stirring occasionally to prevent the ingredients from sticking to the bottom of the pan.
4. Add the sugar, almonds, raisins and cardamom and stir thoroughly for a minute. Remove from the heat and serve warm or chilled in dessert bowls.

From "Feast of India", Rani

Spicy Chai Mix

This is a seasoning mix for quick spicy chai. This mix can be prepared ahead and stored in the refrigerator until needed. Neither the spices nor the tea are cooked. Just add this to any brewed black tea. This recipe is very spicy and amounts of the mix can be adjusted to personal taste.

Ingredients:

- 1 (14oz.) can sweetened condensed milk
- 5 teaspoons ground cardamom
- ½ teaspoon ground allspice
- 1½ teaspoons ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon ground cloves
- 1½ teaspoons ground ginger
- ½ teaspoon ground black pepper
- ½ teaspoon ground nutmeg (optional)

Directions:

1. Mix all ingredients well. Store in a tightly covered container in the refrigerator.
2. Brew a full-flavored black tea (like Assam, Keemun, or Yunnan) extra strong.
3. To drink hot, add 1 Tablespoon (or more to taste) to cup, pour in tea, and mix.
4. To drink iced, pour tea over ice cubes in tall glass add 1 Tablespoon (or more to taste) and stir. For iced tea it is helpful to allow tea to brew for about 5 minutes, and allow to cool a bit before pouring over the ice.
5. Adjust recipe to suit your own tastes.

From: www.thespicehouse.com

Turmeric Rice

This cooks nicely in a rice cooker, but works equally as well in a saucepan.

Ingredients:

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| 2 cups Basmati long grained rice | 2 garlic cloves, peeled, finely chopped |
| 3 tablespoons vegetable oil | ¼ teaspoon ground turmeric |
| 3 whole cloves | 1 teaspoon salt |
| 1 bay leaf | 22 ounce (2 ¾ cups) water |
| 4 cardamom pods (green) | Chopped chives or scallions |
| 2 ¼" piece cinnamon bark (one 2-3 inch small cinnamon stick) | |

Directions:

1. Put rice in bowl and wash in several changes of water, drain.
2. In heavy sauce pan (or fry pan if cooking in a rice cooker) over medium high heat, heat vegetable oil then sauté cloves, bay leaf, cardamom pods and cinnamon. Stir once and add garlic.
3. Add turmeric, salt and rice. Stir gently for one minute.
4. Cook in sauce pan: add water, bring to boil, cover tightly, turn down heat (very low) and cook 20 minutes. Stir rice with fork to separate grains.
Cook in rice cooker: place rice in cooker, add water, set cooker and wait until done.
5. Place in serving bowl and sprinkle with chives or scallions. Serve. (Don't eat the whole spices.)

Adapted from recipe at food.com.

Mixed Vegetable Curry (Bhaji) Serves 4 (generous servings)

Ingredients:

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| 1 medium onion, peeled and chopped | 1 pound broccoli, cut into 1 inch spears |
| 2-4 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped | 2 large carrots, peeled and cut diagonally into 2 inch strips |
| 1 ½ inch piece fresh gingerroot, peeled and chopped | 1 small head cauliflower, cut into 1 inch flowerets |
| 1 fresh green chili | 1 large tomato, chopped |
| 1 cinnamon stick | Salt to taste |
| 1 tablespoon basic curry | 1 cup water |
| ½ teaspoon ground turmeric | |
| 1 large potato, peeled and cut into ½ inch cubes | |

Directions:

1. Heat the oil in a large saucepan. Add the onion, garlic, ginger, green chili, and cinnamon and fry over medium heat until the onion is browned.
2. Mix in the curry powder and turmeric and stir for 1-2 minutes. Add the potato, broccoli, carrots, cauliflower, tomato, and salt and mix thoroughly.
3. Pour in the water, cover and simmer for 10-12 minutes, until the vegetables are done, stirring occasionally to prevent the ingredients from sticking.
4. Serve hot with chapatti or rice, dal and chutney.

From: "Feast of India", Rani

Chicken Curry in Yogurt Mint Sauce

Serves 6

Ingredients:

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|---|---------------------------------|
| 3 lbs boneless, skinless chicken (breast and/or thighs) | 8 green cardamom pods |
| 1 teaspoon ground turmeric | 8 cloves |
| Salt to taste | 4 bay leaves |
| ½ cup plain low-fat yogurt | 2 cinnamon sticks |
| ¼ cup vegetable oil | ½ teaspoon black peppercorns |
| 1 large onion, peeled and grated | 3 teaspoons basic garam masala |
| 6 cloves garlic, peeled and grated | 1 teaspoon paprika |
| 1-inch piece fresh gingerroot, peeled and grated | ¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg |
| | 2 cups (1 can) chicken stock |
| | ¼ cup chopped fresh mint leaves |

Directions:

1. Cut chicken into 10-12 pieces. Place in a large bowl. Rub the turmeric, salt and yogurt over the chicken and set aside to marinate for 1 hour.
2. Heat the oil in a large pot. Add the onion, garlic, and ginger and fry over medium heat until the onion is browned. Add the cardamom, cloves, bay leaves, cinnamon, and peppercorns and stir for 2 minutes. Add the garam masala, paprika and nutmeg and mix thoroughly for 3 minutes
3. Add the chicken and yogurt marinade and chicken stock and stir. Cover and simmer for 45 minutes, until the chicken is tender. Add the mint leaves, cover and cook for 5 minutes.
4. Serve hot with pilao (seasoned) or plain rice; nan roti, chapatis, parathas, or pooris; accompanying vegetables and legumes.

Adapted From: "Feast of India", Rani

Sweet Mango Chutney

Ingredients:

6 firm half-ripe mangos, peeled and sliced thin
1 cup cider vinegar
1 cup packed light brown sugar
10 cloves garlic, peeled and sliced
1 1-inch piece fresh gingerroot, peeled and sliced thin
1 teaspoon ground dried red chilies
Salt to taste

Directions:

Bring all of the ingredients to a boil in a medium-sized pot. Reduce the heat to low and simmer for 30-40 minutes, stirring occasionally to prevent the ingredients from sticking to the bottom of the pan. Remove the pan from the heat and let the chutney cool before serving.

From "Feast of India", Rani

Fragrant Indian Meatballs (Kofta) Serves 4

Ingredients:

1 pound lean ground beef
1 medium onion, peeled and chopped fine
3 cloves garlic, peeled and crushed
1½ -inch piece fresh gingerroot, peeled and chopped fine
1 fresh green chili, chopped fine
½ teaspoon roasted basic garam masala
2 tablespoons plain low-fat yogurt
1 Tablespoon finely chopped cilantro or fresh mint leaves
Salt to taste
1 teaspoon turmeric
2 Tablespoons vegetable oil
1 cinnamon stick
3 green cardamom pods
6 cloves
10 black peppercorns
2 bay leaves
1 medium tomato, chopped (or ½ can diced tomato)
1 cup water

Directions:

1. In a bowl, thoroughly mix the meat, onion, garlic, ginger, green chili, garam masala, yogurt, cilantro or mint, salt and turmeric.
2. Heat the oil in a large saucepan. Add the cinnamon, cardamom, cloves, peppercorns, and bay leaves and fry over medium heat until the spices turn a shade darker.
3. Add the meatballs, stir gently and fry for 5 minutes, until evenly browned. Stir in the tomato and water. Cover and simmer for 15 minutes, until the meatballs are cooked through.
4. Serve hot with plain rice, Sweet Mango Chutney, accompanying vegetables and bread.

From: "Feast of India", Rani