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Is it a Spice or Is it an Herb?

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- To a botanist, an herb is any non-woody plant.
- To a healer, it's a biologically active plant.
- To a cook, it is any plant that provides flavor.
- Native people used herbs for medicine, ceremony and flavor.



Definition: a leafy plant that gives flavor to a single or combination food through its leaves, seeds, pods, roots, and/or bark.

Keep fresh herbs handy

- Keep fresh garlic and ginger in your kitchen where they can get some ventilation
- Store parsley, dill, thyme, oregano, and cilantro in the refrigerator, along with any other fresh seasonal wild or garden-grown plants used in cooking

Dry herbs for future use

- Leafy herbs dry nicely in a food dehydrator
- Leave them in a paper bag in a warm, dry, well-ventilated room for a couple of weeks also allows them to dry for future use
- Some herbs, like basil loses much of its flavor when dried, so freeze them on a cookie sheet to keep them from freezing into a solid lump, then store them frozen in a food storage container, and remove some at the last minute as needed

Purchase as many herbs as possible when they are in season

- Farmers Markets often offer locally grown varieties, shop when it's time
- Store them in tightly closed airtight jars
- Label jars with easily visible labels. Write the herb names on masking tape with magic markers. These labels are easy to remove when the jar is empty. You can't have too many herbs and spices. They last for years, and the worst that can happen as they age is that they become weaker, which you can mitigate by using larger quantities

Keep them easily accessible

- Arrange storage containers alphabetically inside kitchen cabinets
- If your cabinet is deep, keep smaller jars in front of the larger ones

Mint dried for tea can be placed in covered tins. Use any scheme that increases accessibility. Being able to see the selection and smell your herbs makes it easier to choose the right ones. Be creative!

CURRY

Curry is a generic term, and although there is no one specific attribute that marks a dish as "curry", some distinctive spices used in many, though certainly not all, curry dishes include turmeric, cumin, coriander, fenugreek, and red pepper. It is usually understood to mean "gravy" or "sauce", rather than "spices". Color is often golden yellow and taste is commonly considered "hot".

Curry's popularity in recent decades has spread outward from the Indian subcontinent to figure prominently in international cuisine. Consequently, each culture has adopted spices in their indigenous cooking, to suit their own unique tastes and cultural sensibilities. Curry can be called a pan-Asian or global phenomenon, with immense popularity in Thai, British and Japanese cuisines.

Beef Curry Recipe

Ingredients for four servings:

- 1# lean Beef Steak (round steak works well)
- 1 qt. Water or Beef Stock
- 2 Small white onions finely chopped
- 2 tsp ginger puree
- 1 tsp. Turmeric
- 4 tsp. mild curry powder
- 1/4 tsp chili powder
- 2 tsp.garam maslai powder
- 1 c. yogurt
- 2 T Tomato Puree
- 2 c. Pureed Onion
- 1/4 c. chopped fresh coriander leaves to garnish

To make the Onion Puree, bring a small pan of water to the boil and add some chopped onions. Boil until soft, drain and puree with a hand blender or in a food processor. Freeze any extra you make for next time.

Pour the oil into a large saucepan bring up to a medium heat. Add the onions and reduce the heat to low. You can optionally add 1 or 2 Whole star anise which help bring out the sweetness of the onions and imparts a subtle aniseed flavor but remove them once the onions are cooked. Sweat the onions gently until they become translucent.

Make a paste of the ginger puree, garlic puree, curry powder, Turmeric powder, Chilli powder, with a little water. Add to saucepan and stir in well and fry for a couple of minutes. Now add your Beef Steak. Stir in well.

Mix the Yogurt, Tomato Puree, Onion Puree, together in a jug with the water or stock and pour into the saucepan and mix in well. Turn up the heat until the sauce begins to simmer and leave to simmer for 20 Minutes. Stir occasionally

DILL

Dill (*Anethum graveolens*) is a short-lived perennial herb. It is the sole species of the genus. It grows to 16–24 in, with slender stems and alternate, finely divided, softly delicate leaves 3–7 in. long. The ultimate leaf divisions are broad, slightly broader than the similar leaves of fennel, which are threadlike, but harder in texture. The flowers are white to yellow, in small umbels. The seeds are thick, and straight to slightly curved with a longitudinally ridged surface.

Its seeds, dill seeds are used as a spice, and its fresh leaves, dill, and its dried leaves, dill weed, are used as herbs.

HISTORY

Dill originated in Eastern Europe. Zohary and Hopf remark that "wild and weedy types of dill are widespread in the Mediterranean basin and in West Asia."

Although several twigs of dill were found in the tomb of Amenhotep II, they report that the earliest archeological evidence for its cultivation comes from late Neolithic lake shore settlements in Switzerland. Traces have been found in Roman ruins in Great Britain. In Semitic languages it is known by the name of **Shubit**. The Talmud requires that tithes shall be paid on the seeds, leaves, and stem of dill. The Bible states that the Pharisees were in the habit of paying dill as tithe; Jesus rebuked them for tithing dill but omitting justice, mercy and faithfulness.

In the 8th century, Charlemagne used it at banquets to relieve hiccups and in the Middle Ages it was used as a love potion and to keep witches away. The name dill is thought to have originated from a Norse or Anglo-Saxon word 'dylle' meaning to soothe or lull, the plant having the carminative property of relieving gas.

Uses

Fresh and dried dill leaves (sometimes called "dill weed" to distinguish it from dill seed) are used as herbs. Like caraway, its fernlike leaves are aromatic, and are used to flavor many foods, such as gravlax (cured salmon), borscht and other soups, and pickles (where sometimes the dill flower is used). Dill is said to be best when used fresh, as it loses its flavor rapidly if dried; however, freeze-dried dill leaves preserve their flavor relatively well for a few months. In Vietnam, dill is the important herb in the dish cha ca. Dill seed is used as a spice, with a flavor somewhat similar to caraway, but also resembling that of fresh or dried dill weed. Dill oil can be extracted from the leaves, stems and seeds of the plant. Dill seeds were traditionally used to soothe the stomach after meals.

Cultivation

Successful cultivation requires warm to hot summers with high sunshine levels; even partial shade will reduce the yield substantially. It also prefers rich, well-drained soil. The seeds

are viable for 3–10 years. Plants intended for seed for further planting should not be grown near fennel, as the two species cross. The seed is harvested by cutting the flower heads off the stalks when the seed is beginning to ripen. The seed heads are placed upside down in a paper bag and left in a warm dry place for a week. The seeds then separate from the stems easily for storage in an airtight container.

DILLY BABY CARROTS

INGREDIENTS

- 1 (16 oz.) package baby carrots
- 1 tablespoons margarine or 2 tsp. olive oil
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh dill
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

DIRECTIONS

1. Place carrots in a saucepan with enough water to cover.
2. Bring to a boil, and cook 10 minutes, until tender (or steam until tender).
3. Remove from heat, and drain. Gently toss with margarine.

MINT

***Mentha* (mint)** is a genus of about 25 species (and many hundreds of varieties) of flowering plants in the one plant family. Species within *Mentha* are found across Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia, and North America. Several mint hybrids also commonly occur.

Mints are aromatic, almost exclusively perennial, rarely annual, herbs. They have widespread underground rhizomes and erect, branched stems. The leaves are arranged in opposite pairs. Leaf colors range from dark green and gray-green to purple, blue and sometimes pale yellow. The mint stems or stalks are always 4-sided or square. While the species that make up the *Mentha* genus are widely distributed and can be found in many environments, most *Mentha* grow best in wet environments and moist soils. Mints will grow 10–12 inches tall and can spread over a non-determinate sized area. Due to the tendency to spread unchecked, mints are considered invasive.

The mint family has a large grouping of recognized hybrids. As with all classifications of plants, this list can go out of date at a moment's notice. Synonyms, along with cultivars and varieties where available, are included within the specific species. Some are Ginger Mint, Peppermint, False Apple Mint, Foxtail Mint, Hairy Mint, Cuban Mint or Pineapple Mint.

Cultivation - All mints prefer, and thrive, in cool, moist spots in partial shade. In general; mints tolerate a wide range of conditions, and can also be grown in full sun. They are fast growing, extending their reach along surfaces through a network of runners. Due to their speedy growth, one plant of each desired mint, along with a little care, will provide more

than enough mint for home use. Some mint species are more invasive than others. Even with the less invasive mints, care should be taken when mixing any mint with any other plants, lest the mint take over. To control mints in an open environment, mints should be planted in deep, bottomless containers sunk in the ground, or planted above ground in tubs and barrels.

Some mints can be propagated by seed. Growth from seed can be an unreliable method for raising mint for two reasons: mint seeds are highly variable, one might not end up with what one presupposed was planted; some mint varieties are sterile. It is more effective to take and plant cuttings from the runners of healthy mints.

The most common and popular mints for cultivation are peppermint (*Mentha × piperita*), spearmint (*Mentha spicata*), and (more recently) apple mint (*Mentha suaveolens*). Mints are good companion plants, repelling pest insects and attracting beneficial ones. Mints are susceptible to whitefly and aphids.

Harvesting - Harvesting of mint leaves can be done at any time. Fresh mint leaves should be used immediately or stored up to a couple of days in plastic bags within a refrigerator. Optionally, mint can be frozen in ice cube trays. Dried mint leaves should be stored in an airtight container placed in a cool, dark, dry area.

Culinary - The leaf, fresh or dried, is the culinary source of mint. Fresh mint is usually preferred over dried mint when storage of the mint is not a problem. The leaves have a pleasant warm, fresh, aromatic, sweet flavor with a cool aftertaste. Mint leaves are used in teas, beverages, jellies, syrups, candies, and ice creams. In Middle Eastern cuisine mint is used on lamb dishes.

In British cuisine, mint sauce is popular with lamb. Mint essential oil and menthol are extensively used as flavorings in breath fresheners, drinks, antiseptic mouth rinses, toothpaste, chewing gum, desserts, and candies, and mint chocolate. The substances that give the mints their characteristic aromas and flavors are menthol (the main aroma of Peppermint, and Japanese Peppermint) and pulegone (in Pennyroyal and Corsican Mint). The compound primarily responsible for the aroma and flavor of spearmint.

Methyl salicylate, commonly called "oil of wintergreen", is often used as a mint flavoring for foods and candies due to its mint-like flavor. Mints are used as food plants by the larvae of some Lepidoptera species including Buff Ermine.

Medicinal and Cosmetic Use

Mint was originally used as a medicinal herb to treat stomach ache and chest pains, and it is commonly used in the form of tea as a home remedy to help alleviate stomach pain. During the Middle Ages, powdered mint leaves were used to whiten teeth. Mint tea is a strong diuretic. Mint also aids digestion, in

a way that it breaks down the fats. In recent years, it has been often studied to obesity. Menthol from mint essential oil (40-90%) is an ingredient of many cosmetics and some perfumes. Menthol and mint essential oil are also much used in medicine as a component of many drugs, and are very popular in aromatherapy. Mint is also used in some shampoo products.

Insecticides - Mint leaves are often used by many campers to repel mosquitoes. It is also said that extracts from mint leaves have a particular mosquito-killing capability. Mint oil is also used as an environmentally-friendly insecticide for its ability to kill some common pests like wasps, hornets, ants and cockroaches.

Fatoosh Salad 4 entrée salads

INGREDIENTS

- 2 pita breads
- 8 leaves romaine lettuce, torn into bite-size pieces
- 2 green onions, chopped
- 1 cucumber, chopped
- 3 tomatoes, cut into wedges
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley
- 1 clove garlic, peeled and chopped
- 2 tablespoons sumac powder
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh mint leaves

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F
2. Toast pitas 5 to 10 minutes in the preheated oven, until crisp. Remove from heat, and break into bite size pieces.
3. In a large bowl, toss together toasted pita pieces, romaine lettuce, green onions, cucumber, and tomatoes.
4. In a small bowl, mix the parsley, garlic, sumac powder, lemon juice, olive oil, salt, pepper, and mint. Pour over the pita mixture, and toss just before serving.

Mint Juliep

INGREDIENTS

- 1/4 cup water
- 1/4 cup white sugar
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh mint leaves
- 2 cups crushed ice
- 1/2 cup prepared lemonade
- Fresh mint sprigs, for garnish

DIRECTIONS

1. In a small saucepan, combine the water, sugar and 1 tablespoon of chopped mint.

2. Stir and bring to a boil. Cook until sugar has dissolved, then remove from heat and set aside to cool. After about an hour, strain out mint leaves.
3. Fill 2 cups or frozen goblets with crushed ice. Pour 1/2 of the lemonade into each glass and top with a splash of the sugar syrup. Garnish each with a mint sprig and a straw.

Chives

Chives (*Allium schoenoprasum*) are the smallest species of the onion family. Chives (Alliaceae) native to Europe, Asia and North America. Chives are referred to only in the plural, because they grow in clumps rather than as individual plants. Chives is also the only species of *Allium* native to both the New and the Old World.

Its species name derives from the Greek *skhoinos* (sedge) and *prason* (onion). Its English name, *chive*, derives from the French word *cive*, which was derived from *cepa*, the Latin word for onion. Culinary uses for chives involve shredding its leaves (straws) for use as condiment for fish, potatoes and soups. Because of this, it is a common household herb, frequent in gardens as well as in grocery stores.

The chive is a bulb-forming herbaceous perennial plant, growing to 5-8 inches tall. The bulbs are slender conical, 1-2 inches long and 1/2 inch broad, and grow in dense clusters from the roots. The leaves are hollow tubular with a soft texture, although, prior to the emergence of a flower from a leaf, it may appear stiffer than usual. The flowers are pale purple, star-shaped with six tepals before opening. The seeds are produced in a small three-valved capsule, maturing in summer. The herb flowers from April to May in the southern parts of its habitat zones and in June in North Dakota. It also has insect-repelling properties which can be used in gardens to control pests. Chives are repulsive to insects in general, due to its sulfur compounds, its flowers are attractive to bees.

Culinary

Chives are grown for their leaves, which are used for culinary purposes as flavoring herb, and provide a somewhat milder flavor than those of other *Allium* species (onion, garlic). Chives have a wide variety of culinary uses, such as in traditional dishes in France and Sweden, among others. In his 1806 book *Attempt at a Flora (Försöktil en flora)*, Retzius describes how chives are used with pancakes, soups, fish and sandwiches. It is also an ingredient of the *gräddfil* sauce served with the traditional herring dish served at Swedish midsummer celebrations. The flowers may also be used to garnish dishes. Chives are one of the "fines herbes" of French cuisine, which also include tarragon, chervil and/or parsley. Chives can be found fresh at most markets year-round, making it a readily available herb; it can also be dry-frozen without much impairment to its taste, giving home growers the opportunity to store large quantities harvested from their own garden.

In cultivation

Retzius also describes how farmers would plant chives between the rocks making up the borders of their flowerbeds, to keep the plants free from pests (such as Japanese beetles). Its flowers are attractive to bees, which are important for gardens with an abundance of plants in need of pollination. Chives are cultivated both for their culinary uses and their ornamental value; the violet flowers are often used in ornamental dry bouquets. Chives thrive in well-drained soil, rich in organic matter, with a pH of 6-7 and full sun. Chives can be grown from seed and mature in summer, or early the following spring. Typically, chives need to be germinated at a temperature of 75 to 80 degrees and kept moist. They can also be planted under a cloche or germinated indoors in cooler climates, then planted out later. After at least four weeks, the young shoots should be ready to be planted out. Chives are also easily propagated by division. In cold regions, chives die back to the underground bulbs in winter, with the new leaves appearing in early spring. Chives starting to look old can be cut back to about 3-4 inches. When harvesting, the needed number of stalks should be cut to the base. During the growing season, the plant will continually regrow leaves, allowing for a continuous harvest.

Medical uses

The medical properties of chives are similar to those of garlic, but weaker; the faint effects in comparison with garlic are probably the main reason for its limited use as a medicinal herb. Containing numerous organosulphide compounds such as allyl sulfides and alkyl sulfoxides, chives are reported to have a beneficial effect on the circulatory system. As chives are usually served in small amounts and never as the main dish, negative effects are rarely encountered, although digestive problems may occur following overconsumption. Chives are also rich in vitamins A and C, and contain trace amounts of sulfur and are rich in calcium and iron. The juice of the leaves can be used for fighting fungal infections, mildew and plant scab.

History and cultural importance

Chives have been cultivated in Europe since the Middle Ages, although signs of its usage date back to 5000 years ago. The Romans believed chives could relieve the pain from sunburn or a sore throat. They believed that eating chives would increase blood pressure and acted as a diuretic. Romanian Gypsies have used chives in fortune telling. It was believed that bunches of dried chives hung around a house would ward off disease and evil.



Chive Mushroom Soup

INGREDIENTS for 4 – ½ cup servings

- 1 cup finely chopped fresh mushrooms
- 1/8 cup olive oil
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon ground mustard
- 1 cup chicken broth
- 1 cup half-and-half cream
- 2 tablespoons snipped chives

DIRECTIONS

1. In a saucepan, saute mushrooms in butter until tender. Stir in flour, salt and mustard until blended; gradually stir in broth. Bring to a boil; cook and stir for 2 minutes. Reduce heat; stir in the cream and chives. Cook 5 minutes longer or until heated through.

Chicken Chive Soup

INGREDIENTS for 8 servings

- 4 (14.5 ounce) cans roasted garlic or plain chicken broth, divided
- 2 large lemons
- 3 cups cooked rice, divided
- 1 cup half and half
- 12 ounces cooked chicken breast, cut into 1/2-inch pieces
- 1/3 cup chopped chives
- Salt and ground black pepper, to taste
- Chives, for garnish
- Lemon peel, for garnish

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat broth, reserving 1/4 cup, in 3- to 4-quart saucepan over medium heat until it comes to a simmer.
2. Meanwhile, zest lemon peel; set aside. Juice lemons; set aside.
3. In a food processor or blender, combine 1 1/2 cups cooked rice, heavy cream and remaining 1/4 cup broth; process until smooth. Add rice mixture, remaining cooked rice, lemon juice and chicken strips to broth. Simmer 5 to 8 minutes, or until heated through. Add chopped chives; cook 1 minute. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Garnish with lemon peel and chives, if desired.

Herbal Teas

Herbal teas can be comforting, soothing and tasty, and a good alternative to over-sugary soft drinks. They are also used as herbal remedies. The recipes and combinations of herbs are endless. Meals and moods can be enhanced with tea. The process is simple. Use one herb and a tea ball in a cup, or the tea can be steeped and be used as a part of an event or ceremony, and served in special pottery. Some favorites are lemon (either lemon verbena or lemon balm), spearmint or chamomile.

Experiment and decide what your favorite herb teas are. Plan your garden to include your favorite herbs for tea. Consult books and websites for ideas. Just remember, each person's tastes are unique, and a friend or relative may prefer a different combination of herbs.

HOW TO MAKE

Most herbal teas are infusions made by pouring boiling fresh filtered water over fresh or dried herb leaves or flowers for 5 to 10 minutes to release the herbs' aromatic oils. The general rule is 1 teaspoon of dried herb or 3 teaspoons fresh crushed herb to 1 cup water that has just stopped boiling. The herb (or herbs) can be placed directly into the water or a filter or tea ball can be used. Some teas may require more or less herbs for the best taste. Beware of steeping for too long, as some herb teas will turn bitter if over cooked. Tea-brewing accessories include infuser spoon or two-inch mesh ball for one cup of tea, larger mesh ball or strainer for a pot of tea. Empty tea bags can also be purchased to fill with your favorite herbs. You can find these items as well as teapots and cups in various tea catalogues and sites on the Internet.

Favorite Herb Teas and Combinations

Many herbs which are good for you do not have the best of tastes on their own. I prefer to combine these herbs - such as motherwort, yarrow and passion flower - with green tea and a little honey. Some other herb teas and combinations include chamomile (wonderful flavor), catnip (soothing, aids digestion, not just for cats), rose hips (high in Vitamin C), clover blossom (with mint), ginger (good for digestion), mint (aids digestion), rosemary with lavender flowers, lemon and honey, and sassafras tea.

Medicinal Purposes

Native American and many other cultures used hot beverages made with plant leaves or stems for ailments. Some ailments treated with tea may include stomach aches, nausea, headaches and constipation. Some herbal beverages were also given to mothers to produce adequate human milk for their infant.

Lemon Tea

Ingredients:

- 1 cup lemon verbena leaves
- 3 tbs. lavender flowers

Preparation:

Mix the herbs thoroughly, and store in an air tight container. For a cup of tea, use 1 tsp in a cup of boiling water. Steep for 5 minutes and strain out the leaves. Enjoy with a bit of honey.

Camomile Chai Tea

Ingredients:

- 3 tsp fresh ginger root, grated
- 1 tsp coriander seeds
- 1/8 tsp cinnamon
- 1/8 tsp cardamom
- 1/16 tsp allspice
- 2 tsp chamomile

Preparation:

Combine everything except chamomile in water and simmer for 20 minutes. Remove from heat and add chamomile. Steep for another 10 minutes

Mint Tea

Mint makes an excellent herbal tea on its own, but you'll have something special with the addition of fennel and lemonbalm. An added bonus is that this blend will ease an upset stomach as well.

Ingredients: dry equal parts of

- peppermint leaves
- lemon balm leaves
- fennel seeds

Preparation:

Mix the herbs thoroughly, and store in an air tight container. For a cup of tea, use 1 tsp in a cup of boiling water. Steep for 10 minutes and strain out the herbs.

