

AtoZ World Food by World Trade Press

Spices: Turmeric



Description

Turmeric (*Curcuma longa*) is a rhizomatous tuber with tough, papery brown skin and bright, rusty orange flesh. As a spice, it is most often ground into an intense yellow-orange powder with a mild, gingery aroma.

Origin

Turmeric, a member of the ginger family, is native to Indonesia and southern India; another name for turmeric is Indian saffron. Turmeric was brought to Europe in the 1200s, but is still most commonly grown in India.

Varieties

Popular commercial turmeric cultivars include Madras and Alleppey, also called Alleppey Finger. Other local cultivars include Erode, Salem, Suvarna, Sudarshana, Suguna, Rajapore, Sangli, Nizamabad, and Thodopuza. Close relatives of *C. longa* include mango ginger (*C. amada*), narrow-leaved turmeric (*C. angustifolia*), wild turmeric (*C. aromatica*), zedoary (*C. zedoaria*), and black turmeric (*C. caesia*).

Flavor Profile

Turmeric is warm, peppery, and earthy, with hints of orange, mustard, and ginger.

Nutrient Profile

Turmeric is a good source of manganese, iron, pyridoxine, potassium, magnesium, copper, and vitamin C. Turmeric is also the source of the phytonutrient compounds called curcuminoids: curcumin, demethoxycurcumin, and bidemethoxycurcumin. It also contains the volatile oils termerone, atlantone, and zingiberene.

Preparations

Turmeric is ubiquitous in Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi curries, and in Indian desserts like patoleo. It is most often used as a dried powder, but can be eaten fresh. Fresh turmeric is used in Thai yellow curry and turmeric soup, and in the Cambodian curry paste kroeung. Ground turmeric is common in South Asian, Middle Eastern, Nepalese, Vietnamese, and South African cuisine, and is one of the main components in commercial curry powders. It pairs well with vegetables, eggs, apples, and lentils. Turmeric is also used as a coloring agent in mustard, baked goods, dairy products, margarine, ice cream, yogurt, juice, cereals, and flavored gelatin. In places where the turmeric plant grows, its leaves are used to wrap and cook food.

Season

Ground turmeric is available year-round.

Did You Know?

Turmeric is often used as a fabric dye in India and Bangladesh, especially for saris and the robes of Buddhist monks.

-Gretchen Hopkins for World Trade Press

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Chicken Shawarma

Chicken shawarma is often served with tomatoes, cucumbers, a spread like hummus or lebneh (see recipe), hot sauce, olives, fried eggplant, feta, and rice—all together in a pita pocket. In Israeli cities, you will find shops selling these grilled meat sandwiches on every corner, and many people eat them right on the street. Recipe Servings: Serves 4

Gluten Free

Dairy Free

Kosher

Halal

Prep Time: 25 minutes

Cook Time: 40 minutes

Ingredients

- 2 lemons, juiced
- 1/2 cup (120 ml) plus 1 Tbsp (15 ml) olive oil
- 6 cloves garlic, peeled, smashed, and minced
- 1 tsp (6 g) kosher salt
- 2 tsp (12 g) freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tsp (12 g) ground cumin
- 2 tsp (12 g) paprika
- 1/2 tsp (3 g) turmeric
- pinch ground cinnamon
- red pepper flakes to taste
- 2 lb (900 g) boneless, skinless chicken thighs
- 1 large red onion, peeled and quartered
- 2 Tbsp (20 g) chopped fresh parsley

Directions

Prepare a marinade for the chicken: combine the lemon juice, 1/2 cup (120 ml) olive oil, garlic, salt, pepper, cumin, paprika, turmeric, cinnamon, and red pepper flakes in a large bowl. Then whisk to combine. Add the chicken and toss well to coat. Cover and store in the refrigerator for at least 1 hour and up to 12 hours. When you are ready to cook, heat the oven to 425°F (220°C). Use the remaining tablespoon (15 ml) olive oil to grease a rimmed sheet pan. Add the quartered onion to the chicken and marinade, and toss once to combine. Remove the chicken and onion from the marinade, and place them on the pan, spreading everything evenly across the pan. Place the chicken in the oven and roast it for about 30–40 minutes, until it is browned, crisp at the edges, and cooked through. Remove the chicken from the oven, allow it to rest for 2 minutes, and then slice it into bits. (To make the chicken even crispier, set a large pan over high heat, add 1 tablespoon of olive oil to the pan, followed by the sliced chicken, and sauté until everything curls tightly in the heat.) Scatter the parsley over the top.

Togo Sweet Bananas

Bananas are a ubiquitous part of west African cuisine and sometimes part of every course of a meal. This sweet banana recipe involves a simple preparation with only three basic ingredients. The turmeric gives this popular dessert a unique flavor; variations include substituting brown sugar and heavy cream for the turmeric. Some recipes garnish the dessert with chopped peanuts. Recipe Serving: Serves 6

Gluten Free Vegetarian

Dairy Free

Kosher

Halal

Ingredients

- 1 oz (30 ml) butter
- 6 bananas, peeled and finely chopped
- Pinch of turmeric

Directions

1. Melt the butter in a flame-proof, non-reactive baking dish.
2. Add all other ingredients.
3. Stir over low heat for 1 minute. Cover tightly with foil.
4. Place in the center of an oven pre-heated to 350°F (175°C) and cook for 30 minutes, or until the bananas are cooked through.