



# Culinary Herbs and Spices of the World

By Ben-Erik van Wyk

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## Culinary Herbs and Spices of the World By Ben-Erik van Wyk

For centuries herbs and spices have been an integral part of many of the world's great cuisines. But spices have a history of doing much more than adding life to bland foods. They have been the inspiration for, among other things, trade, exploration, and poetry. Priests employed them in worship, incantations, and rituals, and shamans used them as charms to ward off evil spirits. Nations fought over access to and monopoly of certain spices, like cinnamon and nutmeg, when they were rare commodities. Not only were many men's fortunes made in the pursuit of spices, spices at many periods throughout history literally served as currency.

In *Culinary Herbs and Spices of the World*, Ben-Erik van Wyk offers the first fully illustrated, scientific guide to nearly all commercial herbs and spices in existence. Van Wyk covers more than 150 species—from black pepper and blackcurrant to white mustard and white ginger—detailing the propagation, cultivation, and culinary uses of each. Introductory chapters capture the essence of culinary traditions, traditional herb and spice mixtures, preservation, presentation, and the chemistry of flavors, and individual entries include the chemical compounds and structures responsible for each spice or herb's characteristic flavor. Many of the herbs and spices van Wyk covers are familiar fixtures in our own spice racks, but a few—especially those from Africa and China—will be introduced for the first time to American audiences. Van Wyk also offers a global view of the most famous use or signature dish for each herb or spice, satisfying the gourmand's curiosity for more information about new dishes from little-known culinary traditions.

People all over the world are becoming more sophisticated and demanding about what they eat and how it is prepared. *Culinary Herbs and Spices of the World* will appeal to those inquisitive foodies in addition to gardeners and botanists.

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## Editorial Review

### Review

“If you’re ready to go beyond the basics and delve deeply into the herbs and spices that characterize the world’s cuisines, then this scholarly reference is for you.”

*(New York Times)*

“This beautiful, thorough, well-written and -researched text will be of interest in any public or academic library reference collections as well as to chefs, gardeners, lovers of food, culinary adventurers, and anyone who enjoys a good encyclopedia.”

*(Dawn Lowe-Wincentsen Library Journal, starred review)*

“Outstanding. . . . This is the kind of book to be studied and digested, a kind of encyclopedia to pursue and enjoy in your kitchen.”

*(Adele Kleine Current Books on Gardening and Botany)*

"A substantive work that will be of interest to a wide audience, including botanists, cooks, gardeners, and those with an academic interest in food culture. Introductory chapters cover culinary traditions by region, herb and spice mixtures, propagation, harvesting, and the chemistry of taste and flavor. The bulk of this work focuses on over 150 individual herbs and spices from around the world in alphabetical order by plant name. . . . Overall, this is a useful and impressive general reference guide."

*(CHOICE)*

### About the Author

**Ben-Erik van Wyk** is professor of botany at the University of Johannesburg and the author of several best-selling books on plants and plant use.

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