



# Culinary Herbs and Spices of the World

*Ben-Erik van Wyk*

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## **Culinary Herbs and Spices of the World** 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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