

Spices & Herbs are much more than culinary ingredients – they are part of a rich variety of culture, history and healthiness



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Spices and herbs have been historically very valuable commodities. The trade of spices and herbs across continents has been significant throughout history and continues to play a key role today. Indeed, they have been traded for thousands of years.

Pepper, cinnamon and cloves were some of the most prized spices in Antique civilization. They were very expensive and considered as luxury items, which only wealthy people could afford. At the time of the world exploration, European powers like Portugal and Spain wanted to search new routes to reach Asia without passing through normal land routes.

The Discovery of America by Christopher Columbus in 1492 opened the way to ingredients like vanilla, cocoa and even some chilis that were unknown to Europe. Up until now, spices and herbs are sourced from various regions around the world. India, China, Vietnam are a few to name for spices like cinnamon, cloves or ginger. India by itself is one of the largest exporters of spices

worldwide. We can then imagine how important the export industry is as it represents an outstanding source of revenue and employment for the country.

Spices and herbs define the uniqueness, the diversity, the identity of a regional dish. They are deeply rooted in cultural traditions and cuisines around the world. What would be an Algerian couscous without the traditional spice blend of Ras el Hanout?

They serve as a signature to diverse regions and countries, offering a unique taste experience that enriches dishes with complexity and typicity. They lift up the way we eat and perceive the world around us, offering a global approach to gastronomy and wellness. At Sensient, we pride ourselves on creating solutions together with our customers to meet local and very specific taste expectations.

The interest in spices and herbs is also related to the desire for authenticity and naturalness in consumers' food. They can be linked to emotion and memory. It reminds people of a special dish, a special moment of their life, their childhood. In my case, my mum used to cook one of my favorite dishes called "Blanquette de veau" (veal stew) and she would always add a few cloves in the sauce. Since then, I always link the taste of cloves to that specific dish from my youth. This is how powerful the emotional impact of spices and herbs can be.

Herbs also evoke the vitality and sun-kissed flavors of the Mediterranean diet, resonating with consumers seeking freshness and well-being. We often receive requests from our customers for flavor notes like: herbes de Provence, lemon & rosemary, tomato & fresh basil... These profiles are cherished by consumers as it benefits from a very positive health and taste halo.

However, dried herbs cannot replicate the freshness of freshly picked herbs. This is also where our expertise at Sensient comes into play. We have solutions to offer in that line, like natural extracts, which we have been producing for decades. We are using various extraction technologies such as CO₂ supercritical extraction, percolation, and



counter-current extraction to capture and preserve the authentic flavors of herbs.

Take the example of ginger, which profile varies a lot depending on the extraction method: percolation imparts earthy tones with mild heat, distillation yields deep and earthy flavors, CO₂ extraction accentuates fresh cut ginger and root notes, and molecular distillation captures lifted earthy tones with minimal color impact.

In the formulation of seasonings for snacks, spices and herbs play a key role. They enable to replicate home-cooked experiences in a crisp's bite. The goal is to provide customers with a "full dish" experience through a simple snack like a potato crisp.

Experimenting with spices and herbs is an adventurous journey, it allows me to explore new flavors and expand my culinary horizon as a flavorist.

This approach involves carefully selecting and combining spices and herbs to our extract solutions to create seasoning blends that evoke the

essence of a particular cuisine or dish. From a chicken shawarma, a Thai green curry, to an African Chakalaka or a fresh mix of Provençal herbs... It is very satisfying to be able to create a blend that will make people embark on a sensory journey.

Speaking of sensory, it is important to note the difference between spiciness and heat in culinary contexts: a dish can in fact be flavorful, spicy without being overwhelmingly hot. Additionally, spices and herbs can extend beyond taste: they can bring vibrant natural colors. Think of turmeric's golden yellow or paprika's deep reds coloring dishes like curry or goulash and bringing taste and colors since antiquity.

They also offer health benefits. Indeed, spices and herbs possess medicinal and digestive virtues. Clove offers analgesic and antiseptic properties, sage provides antibacterial and anti-inflammatory benefits, and anise aids digestion. Some herbs like lavender, verbena or chamomile can be consumed as infusion and teas, for their calming and relaxing properties. This medicinal heritage has passed through the ages, inspiring flavors and seasonings formulations for today's NPDs.

Spices are also natural flavor enhancers that can compensate for example the reduced sodium levels in dishes, by enhancing the overall taste experience.

There are also challenges faced by the spices and herbs industry. Climate change affecting the crop yields, the price fluctuation on the market and the need for more sustainable sourcing.

In conclusion, spices and herbs are not just culinary ingredients, they represent a rich variety of culture, history, and healthiness. Their applications in diverse cuisines continue to shape culinary experiences and innovations, adding depth to our food, offering consumers a taste of the world and a journey through time at each bite. They continue to be key ingredients in our life, enriching our culinary experience and economy.



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