

# A Spice Heaven

As Eid-ul-Azha approaches so does our creativity for new recipes, and new recipes call for an army of brand new spices. All around the year the condiments we use every day becomes bland and our taste buds crave new senses during Eid. Eid-ul-Azha is a special occasion, which means special dishes, not to mention the fresh new meat deserves only the freshest and best spices to amp their flavour. Give your taste buds a groove by experimenting your heart out and exploring all the goodness you can get with a new spice.

Gulshan-1 bazaar is widely known for its fresh produce and affordable groceries, but spices too are one of those condiments that this place holds by dozens. All these spices can be found in numerous markets, bazaars and grocery outlets across the city, but the ones found here are fresh and raw and will appeal to you like nowhere else. Stacked in rows, packaged and open, feel the spices

before you buy them, that too at the most affordable rates!

## CINNAMON

A staple in every kitchen, cinnamon is one of those spices that compliment both sweet and savoury dishes. Bursting with woody aromas this can be used in whole pieces or powdered depending on how you want the scent and flavours to diffuse in the dish. This aromatic spice can be found neatly rolled up in sticks and is priced at Tk 1400 per kg.

## CARDAMOM

A spice we all hate when we bite into it, but no dish would be complete without it. Cardamoms have different types for different preferences and tastes and are used in all sorts of dishes. Green cardamom is mostly used in sweeter dishes and is priced at Tk 2700 per kg, while the black larger ones are used for a stronger flavour in savouries, priced at Tk 1600 per kg.

## STAR ANISE

A must for the best beef in town, this will add a burst of liquorice like flavours to your broth. Use them in moderate amounts as this is a very strong spice and too much can be overpowering. These beautiful star shaped spice is priced at Tk 1200 per kg.

## CUMIN

Do not rush it, but incorporate cumin slowly in your dishes to release all its earthy and nutty flavours. Be careful with the amount as it is very hot and can be bitter. Shahi Jeera, mostly used in richer foods is priced at Tk 1900 per kg while the regular is priced at Tk 320 per kg.

## CLOVES

These aromatic buds give off a sweet and spicy feel at the same time, making them a staple in

the Bengali kitchen and a must for a lot of dishes. Cloves can be found at Tk 1500 per kg.

## PEPPER

This "King of spices" will give you a spicy punch, so careful with the measurements! The black pepper is spicier and priced at Tk 2600 per kg, while the white pepper is a bit milder and has fewer spicy notes and is priced at Tk 1200 per kg.

## NUTMEG

With mild earthy flavours and strong spicy scents, nutmeg is a must for soul foods. Although it is not used as much in everyday dishes, during Eid one cannot do without it. On top of its addition to taste, nutmegs are also good for the liver and can be a nice kidney detox. Used in very small amounts, one can score about 4 whole nutmegs for as little as Tk 10.

## MACE

A light, sweet and tangy spice that elevates the rice, and commonly identified as the covering of the nutmeg, mace too is a staple for biriyani. Opt for blades of maces instead of a powder that will seem similar to a nutmeg. These sour blades are priced at Tk 2700 per kg and are a must for gravies.

## PAPRIKA

Red meat meals ask for the reddest gravies, and paprika delivers just that. This red-hot powder is not only used for that vibrancy, but also adds a heap of flavour to the new meat. Also used in chicken and fish, this red powdered goodness can be found at Tk 900 per kg.

## BAY LEAVES

Be it biriyani, polao, beef stews or chicken, a few bay leaves are a must for that nice woody scent. Bay leaves can be found in every grocery store there is, but you can hardly ever get them fresh. Score fresh bay leaves at Tk 20 a packet.

## ALOO BUKHARA

One of the best things about biriyani, besides the potatoes, has to be the sweet and sour taste that diffuses into the rice from the Aloo Bukharas. Biriyani feels incomplete without this chewy sweet gem, so stock up on these prunes costing Tk 550 per kg.

## RAISINS

Eid will never seem like Eid without a heavy breakfast of shemai and jorda cooked to perfection and sprinkled with raisins. These sweet, chewy and dried pods are priced at Tk 480 per kg.

## SAND GINGER

Also known as Ekangi in stores, this is close relative of the ginger but has a distinctive fragrance and scent that attracts all. The Ekangi or Sand Ginger is priced at Tk 1100 per kg.

## PIPUL

Pipul is not an everyday spice, but when making kababs, this is a must. These sticks are not only flavourful, but are healthy for the body as well. Once added, they diffuse heaps of flavour into the food, and go great with meaty recipes, making it a must-get during Eid-ul-Azha. This is priced at Tk 1600 per kg.

## NUTS

The variety of sweet dishes you will be stirring up to welcome morning guests will require some crunch, most of which will be met by a collection nuts. Nutty drinks are always a good idea after some heavy biriyani. Pistachio milk drinks and almond milk are some classics that people simply adore. Walnuts are also often sprinkled on top of biriyani for a light crunch. Peanuts are like the one nut that go with everything, savoury or sweet. Almonds are priced at Tk 800 per kg, cashews at Tk 1050 per kg, walnuts at Tk 1600 per kg, peanuts at Tk 220 per kg and pistachios at Tk 2100 per kg. These are some of the most affordable rates for nuts in the city, so there is really no place better to score them.

If you are an avid cook or spice fanatic or simply a foodie, a trip to the Gulshan-1 bazaar is a must, especially before Eid for it is no less than a spice haven that will tingle your senses-- knock yourself out.

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Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed

