

THE MILLENNIAL COOK
FARIHA AMBER



Flavours locked in spices and herbs



Herbs and spices — versatile, flavourful and the primary element that distinguishes one cuisine from the other are more than just cooking ingredients. Anyone with a fondness for cooking can surely resonate with the fact that the recipe for creating scrumptious food lies in attaining the perfect balance of spices.

The redolent aroma and vibrant colours of spices and herbs are by themselves enough to invigorate our senses. While the brick red of cayenne pepper contains attention seeking qualities, the subtle hues of Himalayan salt on the other hand are very appealing to the eyes.

It is marvellous how there are thousands of spices available all around the world, with each of these having their unique flavour profile. It is also fascinating how one particular spice can speak volumes about the specific cuisine it originates from.

The numbing sensation of Sichuan peppercorns and the heat from Korean gochugaru provide a synopsis of the fiery taste palate of Asia, while the tangy taste of za'atar and sumac are enough to define the inclusion of tartness in Middle Eastern cuisine. Not to mention the herby notes of Italian seasoning that depict the mildness preferred in Italian food.

Without any question, the right mix of spices and herbs can be the game changer for any ordinary dish, and once you discover the best combinations, it is as if the spatula transforms into a wand and gastronomical magic is concocted with it in the kitchen!

Albeit it takes years to master the art of cooking, every cook carries some secrets

they have acquired from their many experiments and experiences. Moreover, we have our own selection of pantry must-haves that we just cannot go without, and the satisfaction of stocking up on those herbs and spices is reminiscent of having sufficient bank balance in our accounts.

Speaking about myself, I have grown an obsession towards lemon pepper and regard it as my saviour in the kitchen. The bright peppery note adds a delicious zing to any dish and enhances its flavour by manifolds. Likewise, I have realised that Cajun seasoning and seafood is a match made in heaven and separating them would be sacrilegious.

Being an epicure, I have always had a special spot in my heart (and wallet) for spices, especially the exotic and hard-to-find ones. Whether home or abroad, I find myself constantly in search of the best quality spices and herbs to add to my ever-growing collection of kitchen essentials

that I have built so tastefully over the years.

Seldom, if ever, have I walked into a supermarket or departmental store without checking out the spice aisle, even if that wasn't necessary. There is something just so satisfying about staring at the neatly lined jars and bottles of spices – and I am sure many food connoisseurs take pleasure in this act too.

Gulshan DCC, Dhali, Lavender, Unimart and Gourmet Bazar are common places to explore a wealth of herbs and spices, but I was pleasantly surprised to discover two more hubs for exotic ingredients inside Jamuna Future Park, being Wholesale Club and Gulshan DCC corner (which includes several shops from the main DCC market).

On another instance, I found myself walking into a mecca of Korean ingredients that is Seoul Mart in Banani.

Although nowadays, almost everything is readily available online, somehow the category of spices has not vastly made its

way into this platform yet. Luckily, there are a couple of Facebook pages that I came across after extensive searching that may be of your benefit.

London Diaries is one such page, which to me is no less than a treasure trove, as I happen to receive my supply of rare gems like pink peppercorn, celery salt, and smoked paprika from their stock. If you are on a hunt for Korean spices online, then Korean Food Mart BD is the place to go. As for an array of regular spice collection, there is Alif Corporation BD.

With the vast range of flavours that are available, the sky is the limit when it comes to creating a delightful medley. Adjust the spiciness of your dish with paprika – whether you prefer it sweet or smoked, or sprinkle on some cinnamon sugar atop your dessert to receive lip smacking results.

When you unlock the secrets of spices, you shall also fall in love with cooking, just like I and many other food fanatics did, and eventually may set on a mission to hunt the best herbs and spices you can get your hands on.

Happy exploring!

Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed

