

Did You Know?



Ginger, Zingiber officinale

- The spicy edible portion of the ginger plant is the rhizome, which botanically speaking, is a horizontal, modified, underground stem rather than a root.
- Ginger is in the Zingiberaceae family, the same family as cardamon (*Elettaria cardamomum*) and turmeric (*Curcuma longa*). It is not related to the wild gingers (*Asarum* spp.) found in the northern hemisphere, which have roots with a similar fragrance but contain aristolochic acid (which is associated with kidney damage).
- The tropical plant grows 3-4 feet, has bamboo-like pseudostems (false stems made of tightly wrapped leaf bases), narrow leaves and flowers that emerge behind bracts on a dense cone. Ornamental varieties have showy flowers.
- It takes 8 to 10 months to produce ginger commercially, and is grown in Asia, tropical Africa, parts of Central America and the Caribbean and Australia. Hardy to USDA Zones 8 – 12 and can be grown in containers if moved indoors in colder climates, when temperatures drop below 50°F.
- Ginger prefers to grow in hot humid climates in nutrient-rich soil.
- Young ginger rhizomes have a mild flavor. As they mature, the rhizomes become hotter to taste, drier and more fibrous.
- Ginger is used worldwide in sweet and savory foods and beverages, medicinally as well as in preparing cosmetics.
- The refreshing aroma of oleoresin, which is a mixture of essential oil and resin, is extracted from the rhizome for use in perfumes and cosmetics.
- Ginger was one of the first oriental spices to arrive in Europe, having been obtained by the Greeks and Romans from Arabian traders.
- Popular in diverse cultures, ginger was a major trade item gaining a following around the world including ancient India, Greece, Rome, China and in Victorian England.
- The long history of ginger's health benefits dates to ancient Asian, Indian, Arabic and Chinese herbal traditions.
- Ginger has been used to treat many ailments including the common cold, headaches and arthritis, but the most popular use is for gastrointestinal relief.
- Due to the drying process which breaks down one of the volatile oils in ginger, dried ginger is more pungent than fresh.

Did You Know?



- During the American revolutionary war, soldiers received ginger in their food rations.
- Ginger is available fresh, dried, powdered, pickled, candied, and preserved.
- The sharp bite of fresh ginger comes from the aromatic compound called gingerol. This compound transforms when heated or dried to the sweeter zingerone.

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