

Book Review

Spices and Condiments : J S PRUTHI, National Book Trust of India, A-5 Green Park, New Delhi-110 016, India. 1992 287 pp. Rs. 46.00 ISBN 81-237-0038-5.

Spices and condiments are the dried parts of various plants, cultivated for their aromatic, pungent or otherwise desirable substances. These consist of rhizomes, bulbs, bark, flower buds, stigmas, fruits, seeds and leaves. India is the largest producer and consumer of spices in the world. It earns a foreign exchange of around Rs 3000 million through export of spices and value-added spice products. The publication 'Spices and Condiments', the first and only handbook available in India presenting a very comprehensive information on various spices in the world assumes importance here. The release of the fourth edition within a span of 16 years is a proof of its growing popularity. The purpose of this compendium according to the author is 'to compile, collate, categorise and condense the available information found scattered in different foreign and Indian journals, books, reports and standard reference works which are not easily available to the educated layman'. It is also intended to highlight the economic importance of spices and the tremendous role they play in human health about which the layman may not be fully aware of. To that extent, this book fulfils its objectives exceedingly well in providing authentic, useful and detailed technical information of each spice very comprehensively. The author is an international author-

ity in spices particularly in the field of post harvest technology and quality control. This aspect adds authenticity to the book.

The depth of technical information provided under various spices varies widely based on availability of information. Within this context, the greatest strength of the book lies in the comprehensive coverage of about 70 spices of tropical, sub tropical and temperate regions in alphabetical order encompassing nomenclature, description, physical and chemical properties which would be of special interest to a non-technical or semi-technical reader. The names of different spices in Indian languages are also given for correct identification of each spice. The various uses of spices in foods and beverages as flavourants in medicine, perfumery and cosmetics are described. It also covers PFA (Prevention of Food Adulteration Act) quality standards for spices. The author and the publisher are to be commended for a book remarkably free of misspelt words and typographical errors. However, the reviewers feel that the inclusion of standard references such as Purseglove *et al.* and the review papers by Govindarajan¹⁻⁵ on various aspects of chemistry and technological aspects of important spices would have enhanced the completeness of the bibliography.

Our view is that it will be a very useful and essential book for those who deal with spices in one way or other throughout the world. We also strongly recommend this book as a source of information on spices for students of agriculture/horticulture at the undergraduate level and to students of botany. We also feel that it will serve well for those in extension and research as a ready source of information on a wide range of spice crops. Besides, this book would be a treasure in every household for the simple reason that the consumer is to be aware of quality standards of various spices, he/she uses in the kitchen.

The efforts of the publisher M/s. National Book Trust, India in keeping the cost of this book at a very modest level to reach the hands of all interested in spices and condiments are really commendable.

¹Purseglove J N, Brown E G, Green C L & Robbins S R J 1981 Spices. Vols. 1 & 2. Longman, London, UK.

²Govindarajan V S 1980 Turmeric-Chemistry, technology and quality. CRC Critical Reviews-Food Science and Nutrition. 12(3):199-301.

³Govindarajan V S 1980 Pepper-Chemistry, technology and quality. CRC Critical Reviews-Food Science and Nutrition. 9(2):1-30.

⁴Govindarajan V S 1982 Ginger-Chemistry, technology and quality evaluation. Parts I & II. CRC Critical Reviews-Food Science and Nutrition 17(1):1-196; 17(3):189-258.

⁵Govindarajan V S 1985-1987 Capsicum-Production, technology, chemistry and quality. Parts I-IV. CRC Critical Reviews-Food Science and Nutrition 22(2):109; 23(3):207-288; 24(3):245-385; 25(3):185-282.

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