

## Growing, Using and Enjoying Turmeric

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Turmeric is a wonderfully healthy rhizome of the *Curcuma longa* plant, an herbaceous perennial in the ginger family. Native to Indonesia and southern India, where it grows wild in the forests, it needs temperatures between 68 and 86 °F, and a considerable amount of annual rainfall to thrive.



The turmeric plant deconstructed, leaves, flowers, seeds, rhizomes and roots. It is rarely propagated from seed; instead the rhizomes are dug and divided.

It is commonly known for its deep yellow hue that adds color and unique flavor to food, while staining your fingertips and cutting boards. Traditionally called Indian saffron since its deep yellow-orange color is similar to that of the prized saffron. It has been used throughout history as a condiment, healing remedy and textile dye. Its flavor is

peppery, warm, and bitter, while its fragrance is mild yet slightly reminiscent of orange and ginger, to which it is related. It is used fresh, but most often used in powder form, where the rhizomes have been boiled, dried, and ground into powder. In many cultures where it grows abundantly, leaves are used to wrap food.

This plant has long been used in traditional cultures of the East for thousands of years. It has been harvested by humans for over 5,000 years. Arab traders introduced it into Europe in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, but only recently has it become popular in Western cultures. Turmeric's popularity is owed to recent research highlights its many therapeutic properties.

Cucurmin is one of the active ingredients most revered for its healing properties, but useful volatile oils are also present. It is a very powerful anti-oxidant, anti-inflammatory, anti-tumor, anti-bacterial and anti-viral medicine! It has been used for numerous ailments including cancer, arthritis, Alzheimer's, cardiovascular and kidney diseases, irritable bowel syndrome, diabetes, and other disorders.

The suggested "dosage" is about 1 teaspoon per day. This may seem challenging at first, but there are myriad ways to incorporate it into your daily lifestyle.

### Growing Turmeric in Florida

The leading commercial producers of turmeric include India, Indonesia, China, the Philippines, Taiwan, Haiti and Jamaica. It is easily grown in our Florida climate! Here are some tips from local experts for growing turmeric:

- In Gainesville, no matter when the rhizomes are planted, they tend to only come up in May when the weather warms significantly and rains start.
- They do well in most light conditions from shade to full sun. Under trees with dappled sun and consistent shade is a good location for them and they will require much less water than plants in full sun.
- Once established it does not need heavy irrigation. However it is best to establish new plants in the late spring when we start getting regular rain.
- They appreciate good soil with compost and lots of organic matter, but don't require much supplemental fertilization.
- Plants will produce edible rhizomes within about 1 year.
- When winter months approach, the plants will start to die back. The roots can be left in the ground but it is good practice to mulch heavily to protect them from the cold. This will help with increased organic matter content as well.
- As they enter dormancy in the winter, this is also a good time to dig them up. They will store all winter long indoors and can be eaten and/or re-planted in the spring.
- Dig and divide up the clumps of roots every two years to thin the stand. This is good practice to prevent crowded plants and rotting roots.
- Once you have a stand of established plants, you can dig up roots whenever you need to use them, regardless of time of year.

## Preparing and Storing Fresh Turmeric

Fresh herbs and spices are always nicer to have than older, dried out ones – the same goes for turmeric! Fresh turmeric is less bitter than in dried form, but some may find it more convenient to use dried powders. To use it fresh, wash it well as its knobby roots can hold onto soil. If you grew it or it came from an organic farm, no need to really scrub or peel it; you can use the skins.

It can be grated with a microplane, a ginger grater, or the small side of a cheese grater. Fresh turmeric can also be smashed with a garlic press or pestle and mortar, cut into coins, matchsticks, or cubes; or juiced or thrown into smoothies.

The general rule of thumb for converting dried herbs or spices to fresh in a recipe is 1:3. So 1 teaspoon of dried spice is equal to 3 teaspoons (1 Tablespoon) of fresh. Roughly converted: 1 inch fresh turmeric = 1 Tablespoon freshly grated turmeric = 1 teaspoon ground turmeric.

To keep fresh rhizomes fresher and to prevent sprouting, you can keep them in a paper bag in the refrigerator.

Turmeric can also be sliced into manageable sized pieces and frozen. The consistency will be more watery when thawed, but this doesn't usually matter when incorporated into recipes. You can also blend it with a little water or olive/coconut oil, then freeze it in ice cube containers.

Turmeric can be dehydrated and ground to make powder. The powder may be more convenient to use, and stores easily.

Another method is to grate the rhizomes and pack them in a jar with apple cider vinegar, which can be stored in the fridge for at least a year. The turmeric vinegar can be used in all recipes calling for apple cider or wine vinegar, including salad dressings, sauces, etc.

When purchasing dried turmeric, look to ethnic and specialty spice shops that often have fresher stock and faster turnover than regular grocery stores. Aroma is often a better indicator of quality than color, which can vary from yellow to orange. Store dried turmeric in an airtight container in a cool, dark place for up to a year.

## Recipes

### BEVERAGES

#### **Turmeric Lemonade**

Adapted from Darcey Blue French,  
[www.shamanaflora.com](http://www.shamanaflora.com)

1 quart boiling water  
 ½ lemon, juiced (more if you like it tart)  
 1 Tablespoon turmeric powder (or 2 Tablespoons of grated fresh turmeric root)  
 2 teaspoons ginger powder (or 1 Tablespoon of grated fresh ginger root)

1-2 Tablespoons of honey, to taste  
Small pinch sea salt  
Small pinch black pepper  
1 teaspoon grated orange or lemon zest  
Optional herbal addition: ½ cup Calendula flowers

Mix all the ingredients in a quart canning jar. Pour hot water over mixture and stir. Cover jar and let infuse 4 hours or overnight. Strain. (If you prefer, you can add the honey after straining.) Store in the refrigerator for up to 4 days. Sip 1-2 cups per day. You can serve this warm if you prefer. This blend is wonderful for a sore throat or an impending cold bug. May also be served with sparkling water or with a dash of cayenne pepper. Other herbs that might be added include marshmallow, rosemary, green tea, lemongrass, etc.

### **Turmeric Milk**

1 cup coconut milk + 1 cup water  
(or use 2 cups dairy milk and omit water)  
1 large cinnamon stick  
1 cardamom clove  
About 1” knob of turmeric  
About 1” knob of ginger  
dash of ground pepper  
1 honey  
2 teaspoon coconut oil

Grind up with mortar and pestle the ginger and turmeric with 1teaspoon. of coconut oil. Add all ingredients to a small pot and gently heat (don’t boil) for about 10-15 minutes. Strain and enjoy immediately. You may also strain and refrigerate the liquid, enjoying as a cold tea. Turmeric milk is drunk as a remedy for colds and flu in India and is so wonderfully delicious and soothing!

### **Chai Tea (Iced or Hot)**

1 Tablespoon fennel seed  
6 green cardamom pods  
12 whole cloves  
1 cinnamon stick  
1” piece ginger sliced  
1” piece turmeric sliced  
6 black peppercorns  
7 cups water  
2 tablespoons green or black tea  
4 tablespoons brown sugar or honey (optional)  
1 cup milk or coconut milk (optional)

In a medium saucepan, combine fennel seed, cardamom, cloves, cinnamon stick, ginger root, turmeric, peppercorns and water. Gently simmer (don’t boil) about 15 minutes. Remove from the heat and add the tea and sweetener if desired, allowing to steep at least another 15 minutes. This recipe can easily be modified for spice and sweetener amounts. Can also be left several hours to cool and continue steeping in flavor.

### **Golden Smoothie**

1” knob of ginger  
1” knob of turmeric  
1 small golden beet  
2 carrots  
1/2 banana (optional)  
1/2 cup coconut milk  
1 cup water  
dash of cinnamon to taste

Blend everything till a smooth drinking consistency. Add more or less water to adjust the thickness.

## **MAIN COURSES AND APPETIZERS**

### **Turmeric and Pumpkin Seed Paté**

Adapted from Choosing Raw

1 ½ cups pumpkin seeds, roasted  
(could substitute walnuts...yum!)  
1 Tablespoon tamari or shoyu  
1 clove garlic, minced (or more)  
2 teaspoons ground turmeric (or more)  
6 sundried tomatoes, chopped, soaked in hot water, and drained (or more)  
½ cup liquid (half olive oil, half water)

Place pumpkin seeds, tamari, garlic, turmeric, and tomatoes in a food processor. Process until incorporated. Add liquid in a drizzle with processor running until pate is smooth and spreadable. Makes 6-8 servings.

### **Spiced Kale Scramble**

4 pastured eggs, whisked (may substitute 16 oz firm tofu, mashed)  
1 small diced onion  
1 finely sliced or chopped red pepper  
1 cup chopped kale (or any other leftover green vegetables)

1½ teaspoons turmeric or curry spice blend (to preference)  
2 cloves fresh garlic minced  
1 Tablespoon butter or ghee  
Salt and pepper to taste

Heat the butter in a skillet. Add vegetables to skillet and cook until translucent (onions) and wilted (kale). You can add pre-cooked leftover veggies after the onions become translucent. Then add whisked eggs or mashed tofu. Add turmeric, garlic, salt, and pepper. Cook until done. Serves 2. Serve with sliced avocado, sour cream, cheese, hot sauce, salsa, warm tortillas, or toast to preference.

### **Seminole Squash Soup**

2 Tablespoons butter or ghee  
1 onion, chopped  
Several cloves of garlic, chopped  
1 teaspoon turmeric  
1 teaspoon cumin  
Salt and pepper to taste  
2 ½ lb. Seminole, calabash, or butternut squash (precooked pulp)  
3 cups of chicken or beef or lamb or vegetable broth  
1 cups of water  
1 can full fat coconut milk  
Optional additions to soup: diced carrots or potatoes or celery, grated ginger, ground beef...  
Cilantro for serving (optional)  
Sour cream or yoghurt for serving (optional)

In a large pot, heat olive oil over medium heat. Saute onion and any other vegetables for a few minutes until softened. Add garlic, turmeric, cumin, salt, and pepper. Continue to cook for 1 minute, stirring constantly so that the spices are bathed in the oils. Add squash pulp, broth, and coconut milk. Cook covered on medium-low heat until flavors are combined or about 5 minutes. Remove soup from heat and puree with an immersion blender or blend in batches until smooth. (You can also serve the soup chunky if you wish.) Serve in soup bowls garnished with cilantro or sour cream or yogurt or bits of crumbled bacon.

### **Curried Summer Squash**

About 5 small or 2 large summer squash  
(patty pan are the best but others will do)  
2 Tablespoon Patak's Mild Curry Paste (or to taste)  
1/2 small onion chopped

1 garlic clove smashed  
Salt and pepper to taste  
1/4 cup nutritional yeast (optional flavor addition)  
1/2 teaspoon ground turmeric  
Olive or coconut oil for sautéing

Sautee the onions and garlic with olive oil or coconut oil. Add the squash, curry paste and turmeric, stirring to incorporate paste. Cook until squash are tender but still firm; less time for zucchini/yellow squash, more for firmer patty pan. Add nutritional yeast if using. Makes a good side dish on it's own or on top of rice, like the aromatic rice below!

### **Aromatic Turmeric Rice**

1 Tablespoon coconut oil  
2 large garlic cloves  
1 Tablespoon ginger, grated  
1 Tablespoon turmeric, grated  
3/4 teaspoon sea salt  
1/2 cup cranberries or raisins  
1/4 cup toasted nuts of choice (cashews or almonds work well)  
Cook 1 cup rice of choice (I like basmati or jasmine)

Sautee the garlic, ginger and turmeric. Cook the rice in this pot as per rice cooking instructions. Add cranberries or raisins and nuts at the end.

### **Basic Mild Curry Powder**

Makes about ¼ cup of powder.

2 tablespoons ground cumin  
2 tablespoons ground coriander  
2 teaspoons ground turmeric  
1/2 teaspoon ground mustard seed (optional)  
1/2 teaspoon ground ginger (optional)  
1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes or paprika (optional)

### **Turmeric Powder or Paste**

Adapted from Karen Vaughan,  
[www.acupuncturebrooklyn.com](http://www.acupuncturebrooklyn.com)

3 Tablespoons turmeric  
½ teaspoon fresh finely ground black pepper  
½ teaspoon dried ginger powder  
½ teaspoon cinnamon powder (optional)  
Honey or Honey+Ghee to mix, warmed (optional)

Notes about Turmeric Paste:

- You may store and use this mixture as a powder. For example, stir ½ teaspoon of powder into warm (or cool) water or juice or milk or coconut milk. Hint: It mixes more easily into warm beverages.
- You may mix this powder with honey and store at room temperature. You may then stir ½ to 1 teaspoon of the paste into warm beverage or use as a spread or eat off the spoon.
- You may mix this powder into a honey+ghee blend. You may then stir ½ to 1 teaspoon of the paste into warm beverage or use as a spread or eat off the spoon.

To make powder, mix powdered herbs thoroughly. To make a paste, start adding the warmed honey or honey+ghee into the powder. Use a local raw honey (not whipped or crystallized) and warm it just enough to get it to flow well. (You don't want to over-warm the honey or you will lose the benefits of raw honey.) Continue adding the honey or honey+ghee until all the powder is dissolved and you have a thick paste. If you are new to turmeric and want to reduce the intensity of the flavor, add more of the honey or honey+ghee until you have a thinner paste. For the amount of powder in this recipe (about 3.5 Tablespoons), you can add anywhere from 4 to 12 ounces of honey or honey+ghee. It should fit in a 16 ounce jar. The exact proportions are not critical as this is a food-herb! Dose would be ½ to 1 teaspoonful per day.

## SWEETS

### **Orange Turmeric Cake**

Adapted from Nigella Lawson's Clementine Cake

4 to 5 Clementines (about 1 pound total, or an equal weight of oranges and lemons)

6 eggs

1 cup plus 2 tablespoons sugar (use 1¼ cup sugar if using lemons)

2 1/3 cups ground almonds (= "almond flour")

1 heaping teaspoon baking powder

4 teaspoons turmeric powder

Put the Clementines in a pot with cold water to cover, bring to the boil, and cook for 2 hours. Drain and, when cool, cut each clementine in half and remove the seeds. Then finely chop the skins, pith,

and fruit in a food processor or by hand. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F. Butter and line an 8-inch springform pan or equivalent with parchment paper. Beat the eggs. Add the sugar, almonds, turmeric, and baking powder. Mix well, stirring in the chopped citrus by hand. Pour the cake mixture into the prepared pan and bake for 1 hour, when a skewer should come out clean. (You will need to cover the cake with foil after about 30 minutes to stop the top from burning.) Remove from the oven and leave to cool, in the pan on a rack. When the cake is cool, take it out of the pan. Cake can be glazed with confectioner's sugar mixed to a thick paste with lemon juice and a little water.

## MORE TURMERIC IDEAS

- Turmeric and tahini dressing
- Hummus with turmeric
- Lentil paté with cumin and turmeric
- Roasted garbanzo beans with turmeric or curry spice
- Sweet potato chips with turmeric or curry spice
- Mustard with extra turmeric
- Burgers with turmeric and other spices mixed in
- Hard-boiled eggs marinated in tamari and turmeric
- Deviled eggs with extra turmeric
- Roasted kale chips with turmeric or curry spice
- Roasted nuts with turmeric or curry spice
- Turmeric slaw
- Turmeric included in fermented veggies (sauerkraut)

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