Essential Ingredients for Indian Cooking Checklist

Stock your pantry with a few basic ingredients to create an authentic Indian meal.

Beans, dried

- [ ] Incorporate mung beans, lentils, or chickpeas into Indian dishes, or serve them as a side (possibly in a traditional dal stew).

Cardamom

- [ ] An herb with medicinal properties, cardamom is used in sweets, chai tea, curries, and rice dishes.

Chili peppers

- [ ] Indian cuisine’s reputation for spiciness comes largely from chili peppers. The type of chili used depends on the recipe or the chef, and it can show up in paste, powder, or fresh form.

Cinnamon

- [ ] The sweet spice is used more commonly in savory dishes.

Coriander

- [ ] Both the seeds and the leaves of coriander are put to good use in Indian cooking—frequently as a spice in curries and as a garnish on dal.

Cumin

- [ ] A regular in Indian curries, this strong spice adds a bit of warmth and earthiness to recipes.

Garam masala

- [ ] This blend of spices can contain everything from dried chili peppers to coriander to mustard seed to garlic. It’s typically added to a dish late in the prep so that the fragrance lingers.

Ginger

- [ ] An integral spice in curries, ginger is also used in vegetable dishes and adds flavor to tea and coffee drinks. To prolong the life of fresh ginger, wrap it tightly and store in the refrigerator or freezer.

Mustard seed

- [ ] Indian cooks use a very small, very dark version of the whole seed that has a slight smell similar to curry.

Onion and garlic

- [ ] Considered the “wet seasonings” of Indian cuisine, onions and garlic are used in a wide variety of dishes.

Turmeric

- [ ] This intensely yellow spice is used in many Indian dishes and is considered to be an antiseptic both inside and outside the body.

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